

FALLS

Falls can happen for many reasons. It is not normal to fall. If someone is falling a lot (as often as once a week or more), the reason for the falls needs to be determined.

Some of the reasons that a person might fall are:

- **Seizures** – a fall can occur during the seizure or right after the seizure when a person is not yet fully recovered.
- **Body deformities** – curvature of the spine, one leg shorter than the other leg, club foot, tight heel cord, poorly healed fracture.
- **Balance problems** – due to medical conditions like cerebral palsy, tremors, or a stroke.
- **Medications** – Many medications can affect a person's balance. A change in dose can also impact their balance.
- **A change in the senses** – such as vision, new glasses, broken glasses, eye infection, ear infection, headache.
- **Foot problems** – sore toes, new shoes, poorly fitting shoes or braces.
- **Clothing** – loose baggy clothing, untied shoes, pants that are too long, soles of shoes that are too slippery or "catch" on carpet.
- **Environmental causes** – Uneven, wet or slippery walking surfaces, bad lighting, unsecured area rugs, slippery bathtubs and shower floors, loud noises, or blocked pathways.
- **Tiredness** or an illness causing the person to have a decrease in their energy level.
- An **increase in energy** that causes a person to move too quickly (walking too fast) or be distracted easily.
- An **injury** (including fracture) that causes a person to change how they walk in order to protect the injury.

IF SOMEONE FALLS, WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

Call 911 if the person:

- Is in a lot of pain while lying still or when they move
- Has an obvious deformity (bone sticking out, swelling or unusual position of arm or leg or head)
- Is unconscious
- Gray in color

Anytime someone falls, whether they appear to be hurt or not, they need to be thoroughly examined for any possible injury. ***Do not move them until it has been determined that a serious injury has not occurred.***

IMPORTANT: The fall and all that you see after the fall needs to be written down and reported to other staff members. Often the

injury will not be obvious right away (like bruising), but if the fall has been reported with details about how the person 'landed', bruises that show up later can be explained.

Look for:

- redness
- scrapes or abrasions like "rug burns"
- cuts or bleeding
- swelling
- altered walking gait (i.e.: limping or new requirement for 1:1 assistance)
- any complaint of pain and where that pain is and when they complain. For example, "Joe complains of pain in his right knee when he kneels on it."
- Avoiding ambulation and other movements



FALLS (CONT.)

Once you have taken care of the person who fell and written the report of the incident you may also need to:

- Tell your supervisor or the nurse about the fall. Make sure to follow all appropriate documentation requirements.
- Fix whatever caused the fall (if you can).
- Consider urgent evaluation with a Health Care Provider or at an urgent care site.
- Write down and give to your supervisor and other staff a list of unsafe conditions that are still present (like a slippery sidewalk, or wet floor or broken equipment).
- Consider an OT (Occupational Therapy) environmental assessment.
- Think about what would prevent more falls and talk about it with your supervisor and other staff.

