

When Falls Becomes a Behavior of Concern

Frequent falls may be related to an individual's behavior(s) of concern when one or more of the following factors are present:

- A. The individual lacks skills to request help when needed.
 - They may think that it is too small of an issue to “bother” anyone.
 - They may think that it takes too long for Caregivers to help and they don't want to wait.
 - Ability to ask for help may have declined or been entirely lost as a communication skill.
- B. The individual has significant memory issues.
 - When they stand up ready to move, they forget the need for a walker or cane to be safe.
 - They misjudge how much they can do without the aid of their walker or cane.
- C. The individual is resistant and angry at needing a wheelchair, walker, or cane at this time of their lives to compensate for an injury or medical condition.
 - They may resent their decline in mobility.
 - They may resent having to ask others for help.
 - They may resist learning how to use the walker or cane properly and as a result the device is difficult to use.

Here are a few simple things Caregivers can do to help individual's stay on their feet.

1. Remove throw rugs. Throw rugs are one of the most common causes of tripping in living spaces. The corners flip up easily, and shuffling feet often catch the edge.
2. Watch for items underfoot. This sounds basic, but something can end up on the floor unnoticed in mere moments. Even something like a stray pencil is enough to cause a fall. This goes for pets as well. When the individual is walking around, make sure their pet is secured in a kennel or other room and not weaving between his or her ankles.
3. Keep walking devices nearby. While this may seem like common sense, it is surprising how often others “tidy up” while the individual is resting. Moving a walker out of the way to sweep is not the problem; forgetting to put it back is. If the individual needs to use the restroom urgently, a cane that is too far away can spell disaster.
4. Be aware which individual is “at higher risk” for falls. Even with the most stringent safety precautions not all falls can be prevented. Sometimes, people just lose their balance. With individuals that have poor balance, recovering from a misstep is much harder. To provide preventative assistance:
 - Check on this individual more frequently to assist with mobility, i.e. retrieving the wheelchair, walker, or cane.
 - Check to see if needs are addressed at times in which they are most likely to occur, i.e. getting situated after a meal, laying down, turning off lamps, closing blinds, etc.
 - Check on the individual with greater risk to fall more often and monitor closely as they move around. If you notice anything unusual, take a few steps closer. Simply place a hand on them to help steady balance.
5. If a fall does occur, focus on gently easing the individual to the floor instead of injuring yourself trying to keep them upright. Check the individual for injury. Call for help to rescue the individual off the floor. Speak reassuringly to the individual throughout.



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