

Prescription for Living Well - Preventing Falls

Guest Experts of the North Pine Area Hospital District

We are entering the season that we all fear falling down on slippery, snowy driveways and sidewalks. But did you know that another common cause of falling can be found in our medicine cabinet?

Pharmacist, **Jamie Baker of Thrifty White Pharmacy in Sandstone**, recently spoke at Golden Horizons about all the reasons for falling and how to prevent them. Jamie points out that, "someone falls every second of everyday according to the Centers for Disease Control. This is 29 million falls a year resulting in over 7 million injuries."



Eliminate Fall Hazards.

Preventing falls is important for all but especially urgent as we age. One in three older adults fall each year. A serious fall can start a series of problems that impacts the quality of life

and ability to live independently. After a fall there is often a fear of falling again. This can result in depression and reducing activity, which then decreases muscle strength and balance. The resulting consequence is an increase in the risk of falling again.



Staying active and exercising is a great preventative measure. According to Jamie, the Harvard School of Medicine says that exercising three times per week can decrease the risk of falling by 55%. The point is to maintain good muscle tone, flexibility, stamina and balance.

Jamie recommends the first step is to eliminate tripping hazards in your home. Remove the exposed extension cords, pick up clutter, get rid of

loose rugs, watch the pet, etc. She goes on to recommend installing hand railings on both sides of stairs, use night lights, use non-slip rugs, arrange furniture to allow more room and pick up tripping hazards.

Manage Health Issues. There are many aids to help manage each individual's health issues, so take advantage of them. Use a cane or walker for instance. Get a personal fall alarm, especially if you live alone. And don't forget to get a good night's sleep.

Be particularly aware if you are over 80 years old, have arthritis or pain issues, low blood pressure, conditions that impair your balance such as Parkinson's or MS, or vitamin D deficiency. Also, make sure you drink plenty of water to prevent dizziness.

Understand Medication Risks. The medicine cabinet is another major reason for falling that we don't often think about. Jamie points out that you are at more risk if you take 4 or more medications or if you have recently made medication adjustments such as types of medication or dosage.

Reading the labels on your prescription drugs is very important but often ignored. Check for warnings of dizziness or drowsiness and any other side effects that can impact your vision, balance, thinking clearly, confusion, fatigue, arrhythmias, urinary urgency or decreased neuromuscular function.



It is best to review the drugs that you are taking with your pharmacist and look for drugs that might be a problems. This means both prescription and over-the-counter drugs. There are often many solutions such as reducing the dosage or changing to another medication with fewer side effects.

Jamie also pointed out that an elderly person is often reluctant to admitting that they have fallen. It needs to be understood that admitting having had a fall to your family, doctor or pharmacist is the best way to determine why the fall happened and taking steps to preventing a future fall. Everyone wants to live as independently for as long as possible and this can be done with the help of healthcare professionals.

A personal consultation with your doctor or pharmacist is advised to discuss any concerns. More information is available about blood pressure, antihistamines, antidepressants, urinary incontinence, pain, anticonvulsants, muscle relaxants, heart rhythm control, anti-anginas, antipsychotics, anxiety, sleep and other medications. Jamie has provided an overview of these medications, which are available at www.PineHospitalDistrict.com website, click the 'Prescription for Living Well' box to take you to the page.