



ASSESSING FALL RISK REPORT #2889

BACKGROUND: One out of four people fall each year, but it's worse for seniors. Three million older people are treated in emergency departments for fall injuries. Falls can cause head injuries and can be very serious, especially if the person is taking certain medicines (like blood thinners). A person who falls and hits their head should see their doctor right away to make sure they don't have a brain injury. Many people who fall, even if they're not injured, become afraid of falling. This fear may cause a person to cut down on their everyday activities. When a person is less active, they become weaker and this increases their chances of falling. Most falls are caused by a combination of risk factors. The more risk factors a person has, the greater their chances of falling. Many falls do not cause injuries. But one out of five falls does cause a serious injury such as a broken bone or a head injury.

(Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/homeandrecreationalafety/falls/adultfalls.html>)

WHAT CAN YOU DO: There are ways to help prevent falling and risking an injury. According to the CDC, falls are not a normal part of aging. You can keep on your feet and avoid the risk of a fall by exercising, more specifically, your lower body. Any type of exercises that make your legs stronger and improve you balance can help reduce the risk of falling. Falling injuries can happen anywhere including your home. As you get older, you need brighter lights to see well. So improve the lighting in your home and also hang up light-weight curtains or shades to reduce glare. As you get older, the way medicines work in your body can change. Some medicines, or combinations of medicines, can make you sleepy or dizzy and can cause you to fall. Ask your doctor about what you should take to improve bone, muscle, and nerve health.

(Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/features/older-adult-falls/index.html>)

NEW TECHNOLOGY: Nursing Assistant, Professor Ladda Thiamwong, at the University of Central Florida developed an assessment tool that uses portable sensors to monitor a patient's physical activity. At the same time, she administers a survey to gauge the patient's beliefs about their likelihood of falling. Gauging a patient's physical ability as well as mental processes gives her a better grasp on how to shape a patient's treatment plan, which best prevents their falling. Much research conducted in this field looks primarily to physical indicators of a patient's body, but for many patients this is not the only factor that shapes their perception on how likely they are to fall. "Patients often live in fear of falling and will withdraw from their day-to-day activities because of it," Thiamwong says. "Perception and physical functionality work together with this issue." Her work has been recognized both in the academic world through grants and in her ability to mentor and teach.

(Source: <https://www.ucf.edu/news/a-holistic-look-at-aging-populations-technology-to-anticipate-fall-rates/>)

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