

November is Falls Prevention Month

In Canada, falls are the leading cause of emergency department visits, hospitalizations, and deaths from injury. Additionally, they account for 35% of the total cost of injury in Canada. Falls are the leading cause of unintentional injury in Grey- Bruce and older adults are at the highest risk of being injured from a fall. Falls can happen anywhere, at any time. When we talk about falling, we are usually referring to losing our balance and ending up on the ground or some lower level. You may or may not hurt yourself.

One in 3 adults over the age of 65 and half of adults over 80 fall at least once per year. Those who fall once are twice as likely to fall again. Women are 3 times more likely than men to be hospitalized for a fall. A fall can cause you to lose confidence and reduce your physical activity out of fear of falling again.

Falls are not considered a normal part of aging. There are many risk factors associated with falling and the more factors we have, the more likely we are to fall. Risk factors for falls include things such as vision, substance use, strength and balance, medical conditions and indoor or outdoor hazards. The good news is most falls are preventable and you can reduce your risk of falling:

- Take medications properly to help mitigate side effects:
 - Report any experienced side effects to your health care provider and pharmacist.
 - Take advantage of MedsCheck – a free program for patients to have their medications reviewed by their pharmacist. This helps to better understand your medications, how to take them correctly and how to get the most out of them.
- Remove or repair any hazards around your home:
 - Ensure both indoor and outdoor steps are stable, undamaged, and clear of obstacles.
 - Reduce tripping hazards by clearing clutter and scatter rugs as well as maintaining adequate lighting throughout your home.
- Maintaining good strength and balance helps lower your risk of a fall:
 - Try to do 30 or more minutes of moderate to vigorous activity at least 5 times per week.
 - Including strength and balance activities on most days of the week; tai chi and yoga are great to challenge your balance.
 - Do activities you enjoy! Walk, dance, garden, bike or swim.

Your health care provider can help you identify reasons related to your health or environment that may be contributing to your risk of experiencing a fall and suggest resources (i.e. occupational therapists, who can assist with a home safety assessment to identify and safety hazards at home). There is lots of information on the Grey Bruce Public Health website - [Prevention of Falls in Older Adults \(publichealthgreybruce.on.ca\)](http://publichealthgreybruce.on.ca)

Remember that anyone can fall but as we age our risk factors tend to increase. Falls are not a normal part of aging, and many falls are preventable. Take action to prevent a fall before it happens. Remember to always tell someone about any falls you experienced.