

Calvary Community Care Balance and Medicines

Falls and Injury Prevention – How not to fall for it



All medicines have effects; some of which are beneficial and some which are unwanted.

An older adult taking 5 or more medications per day is at greater risk of falling. Around 2 in every 3 people, 75 and older take at least 5 medicines per day.



Some medications can affect balance

For some people, some medications can affect balance and increase the risk of falling. The types of medications are those taken for:

- Sleeping problems
- Stress and anxiety
- High blood pressure
- Heart problems

Take notice of unwanted side effects of medications such as:

- Feeling drowsy
- Feeling confused and/or having memory problems
- Feeling dizzy and/or lightheaded

- Feeling unsteady
- Fainting
- Being more clumsy than usual
- Having blurred vision

Take particular notice if there has been a change in medications; perhaps the introduction of a new medication, or a change in the dosage of a current medication. Advise your GP of any of these unwanted side effects immediately.

Do not suddenly stop taking your medications without GP or Pharmacist advice.

What you can do

- Keep an up to date list of all medications (both prescribed and over the counter medicines)
- Take your prescribed medication only as directed
- Check the medicine label for further advice e.g. it may advise 'not to be taken with alcohol'
- If the doctor prescribes a new medication, ask about possible side effects (they may not always tell you so ensure you ask)
- Access the easy to understand Consumer Medication leaflets available from many doctors/pharmacists
- Consider a medicine administration aid (blister pack) to help you keep track of your medications
- If the dose of medication has been altered, or the medication is out of date, return them to the pharmacy

Perhaps ask your doctor about ways to deal with sleep problems without using sleeping tablets. Try avoiding coffee and tea before bed, doing more gentle exercise, taking only short naps during the day and using quiet music at bedtime to improve your sleep.

Who can help?

CCC local service centre can provide extra services, either short or long term, should loss of balance adversely affect you.

Your doctor can speak with you about your medications and their side effects. Ask about alternatives. They may also refer you for a Home Medicine Review.

Pharmacists can conduct a review of your medications either at the Pharmacy or in home as a Home Medicine Review. Free service.

My Aged Care gives you access to a range of information and support which can be delivered to you in your home. It is for people 65yrs+, or 50yrs+ for an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person.

www.myagedcare.gov.au or ph. 1800 200 422.

References

Revised and re-published by the Commonwealth of Australia 2011

'Don't Fall For It - A guide to preventing falls for older people'

<http://bit.ly/2ovW0vz>

SA Falls and Injury Prevention Fact Sheet 3
'Medicines and Balance'

<http://bit.ly/2nBXn7e>

Injury Control Council of WA

'Stay on your Feet WA'

<https://www.stayonyourfeet.com.au/>

Need support? Calvary Community Care can support safe, independent living at home with a variety of services and expert advice. Call 1300 66 00 22 for more information.