

Fall Free Living Education Packet

Funded by: CT Collaboration for Fall Prevention at Yale University School of
Medicine through the CT State Department on Aging



753 Boston Post Rd.
Guilford, CT 06437
203.458.4200

One Hamden Center
2319 Hamden, CT 06518
203.288.1623
www.ConnecticutHomecare.org

WHO'S AT RISK?

Everyone is at risk for falling!

Today's Goals:

- What are your personal risks?
- How can you decrease your risks?
- If you fall, what can you do to reduce the negative consequences of your fall?

STATISTICALLY SPEAKING*

- Falls are the #1 cause of accidental injury for CT residents 55 and older
- More than 50,000 people over 65 visited CT emergency rooms, costing more than \$30 million

* Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013; and National Council on Aging, 2013.

WHAT'S THE DANGER?

- Fear – Loss of confidence
- Loss of independence: hospital stays and even nursing home placement
- A fall can cause more than broken bones and bruises: Strokes, kidney and organ failure, infections and even death

FIGHT YOUR FEARS

- The fear of falling is as disabling as falling
- Those with an extreme fear of falling are 3 times more likely to fall

THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF FALLING DOWN

Balance problems

Mobility issues

Multiple medications

Low blood pressure

Sensory deficits

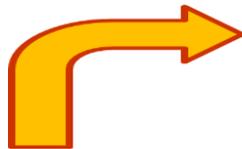
Feet and footwear

Home hazards

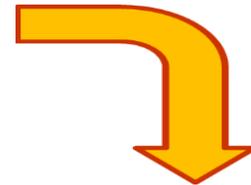


KEEPING YOUR BALANCE

Get Moving!



Sedentary
Not walking much



Balance, walking, and
transferring difficulties



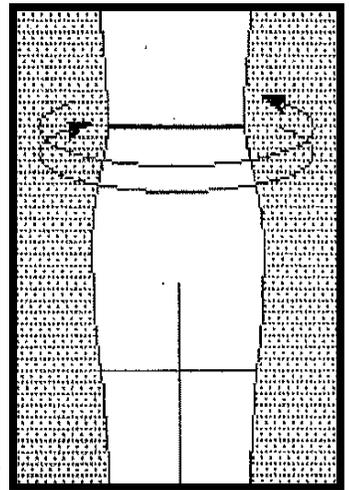
Deconditioned

HEMOCARE CAN HELP

- Physical therapy to assess walking, mobility
- Teach how to use walkers, canes
- Help get the right home safety equipment
- Do a home safety assessment
- Teach balance exercises
- Work with your MD on a medication plan

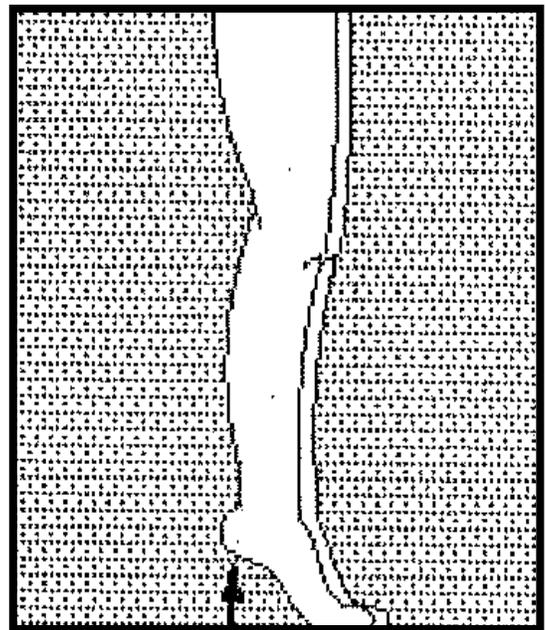
Sink Hip Circles

1. Stand facing kitchen sink
2. Hold on with both hands
3. Do not move shoulders or feet
4. Make a big circle to left with hips
5. Repeat 5 times
6. Make a big circle to right with hips
7. Repeat 5 times



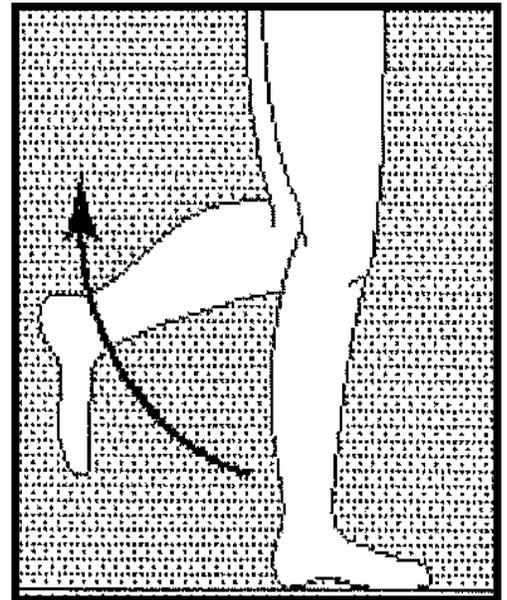
Sink Toe Stand

1. Stand facing kitchen sink
2. Hold on with both hands
3. Go up on you toes
4. Hold for count of 5
5. Then come down
6. Repeat 10 times



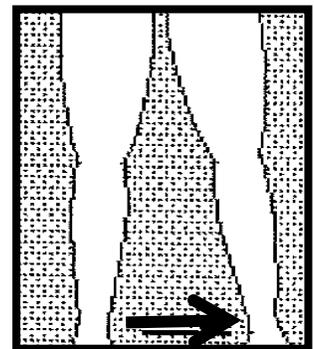
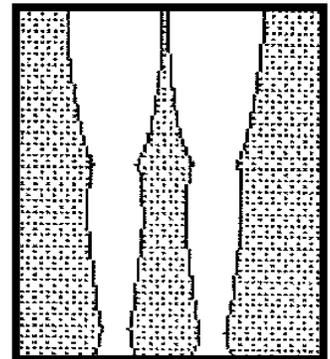
One Leg Sink Stand

1. Stand facing kitchen sink
2. Hold on with both hands
3. Stand on the left leg for count of 5
4. Stand on the right leg for count of 5
5. Repeat 10 times



Sink Side Step

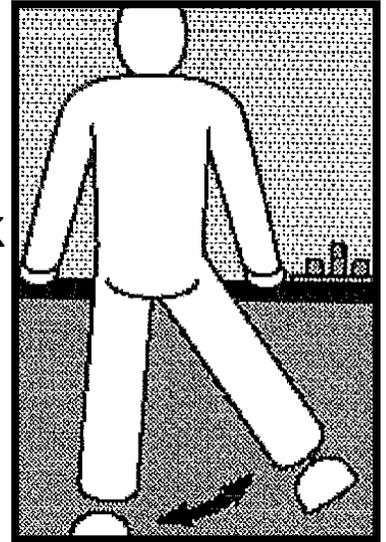
1. Stand facing kitchen sink
2. Hold on with both hands
3. Move hands along kitchen sink step left 5 steps
4. Step with both feet to right 5 steps
5. Repeat 5 times



Connecticut Collaboration for Fall Prevention, 2005, Mary Tinetti, M.D.

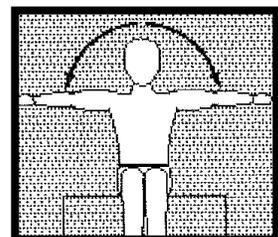
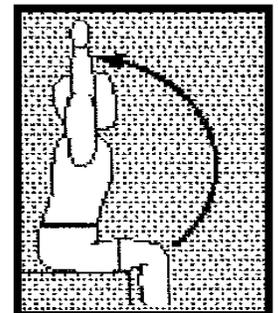
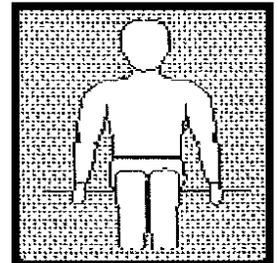
Alternate Leg Out In

1. Stand facing kitchen sink
2. Hold on with both hands
3. Stand on the left leg and move right leg out to the side and back again
4. Repeat on opposite side
5. Continue to alternate each leg
6. Repeat 10 times



Sitting Arm Circles

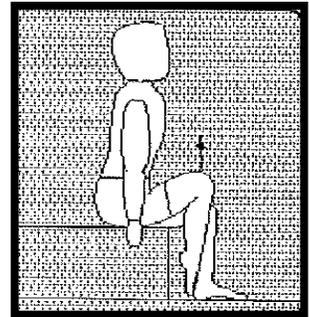
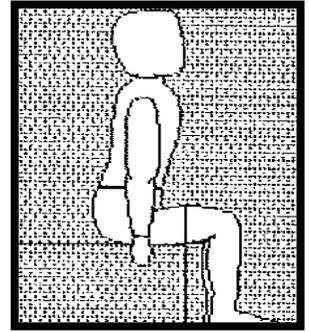
1. Sit straight up, do not lean back, palms facing inward
2. Raise both arms over head
3. Then arms out to side shoulder level
4. Then arms down
5. Maintain posture during the exercise
6. Repeat 10 times



Connecticut Collaboration for Fall Prevention, 2005, Mary Tinetti, M.D.

Sitting Knee Lifts

1. Sit straight up, do not lean back
2. Arms by side
3. Lift left knee up towards ceiling
4. Lower left knee
5. Lift right knee up towards ceiling
6. Lower right knee
7. Repeat 10 times



Connecticut Collaboration for Fall Prevention, 2005, Mary Tinetti, M.D.

WALKING:

- Shoes should be comfortable, fit well, provide protection and support
- Stand upright, take full steps
- Feet should be 4-6 inches apart when walking – **DON'T shuffle**
- With each step, the heel should land on the floor first
- Steps should be of equal length
- Let arms swing naturally at the sides
- Try not to look straight down

TURNING:

- When making turns, avoid sharp pivots or twisting on either leg
- Make shorter steps when turning

SITTING IN A CHAIR:

- Choose a sturdy chair with armrests
- Walk directly up to the chair and turn away from it until the edge of the chair is felt by the back of the legs
- Reach back for the armrest while lowering to the chair



TIPS:

- Use chairs with arms and avoid sofas or low soft chairs
- Take time to stand from a sitting position and pause before walking
- DO NOT bend far forward when getting up from a sitting position
- DO NOT keep a walker too far out in front
- DO NOT bend, stoop, or reach for objects

GETTING UP FROM A CHAIR:

- Scoot to the edge of the chair
- Make sure feet are flat on the floor well under the knees
- Place one foot slightly ahead of each other with toes pointed out
- Feet should be positioned at 1:00 and 11:00
- Lean slightly forward with head and chest up
- Push up with arms and legs to stand
- Feel steady before walking

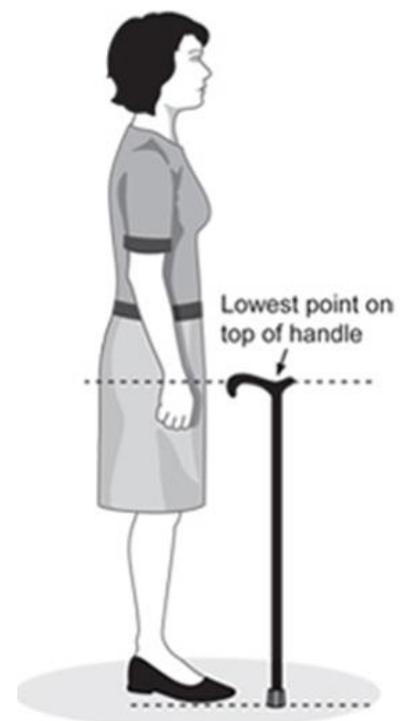
STAIRS:

- Use railings when possible
- In general:
 - Go UP with the stronger leg
 - Come DOWN the steps leading with the weaker leg
- Make sure the entire foot is on each step
- Concentrate on foot placement
- Avoid having a conversation while on stairs and steps
- Place bulky packages or bags on the step one at a time instead of carrying them
- Consider placing laundry in a bag and throwing down the steps instead of carrying it in a basket

WALKING WITH A CANE:

To walk safely with a cane on level surfaces:

1. Hold the cane in the hand on the “good” side to provide support to the “weaker” leg
2. Move the cane and “weak” leg forward together
3. The cane should be moved the distance of one average step forward with each move
4. If the cane is being used for general mobility rather than an injury, it should be held in the dominant hand



TIPS FOR WALKING WITH A WALKER:

Proper instruction is recommended with walker use

- Push or lift the walker an arm's length in front
- Make sure all four ends of the walker are in contact with the ground before taking a step
- Step forward with the weaker leg first
- Go slowly and walk with good posture, keeping your back straight
- NEVER grasp the walker to rise from a sitting position or grasp to lower to sitting
- Look forward when walking, not at feet
- Do not keep the walker too far out in front of you or too close to you
- Attach a small bag or basket to hold small items – walker basket
- Do NOT try to use stairs and escalators with a walker
- Be aware of uneven surfaces

MEDICATIONS MATTER

- Taking 4 or more medications puts you at an increased risk for falls
- Carry an up-to-date list of medications to share with all doctors
- Use one pharmacy for all medications
- Use caution with sedatives, sleeping pills, Benadryl
- Ask the physician about over-the-counter medications

A FEW TOO MANY PILLS?

- Ask your doctor if any of the medications can be discontinued
- Tell the doctor if dizziness, weakness, or confusion are experienced
- Ask your doctor if there are non-drug treatments you can try
- Be honest about alcohol use

BLOOD THINNERS

- Medications containing blood thinners may increase internal bleeding, bruising, and complications from a head injury after a fall
- These injuries may not be noticeable at first
- If symptoms are not recognized, a fall can be fatal

REPORTABLE SYMPTOMS

- Persistent nausea, vomiting, or stiff neck
- Changes in vision or unequal pupil size
- Weakness, numbness or tingling of arms / legs
- Severe headache
- Problem with balance
- Unusual drowsiness, confusion, difficulty speaking
- Chest pain / shortness of breath

LOW DOWN ON BLOOD PRESSURE

- Standing too quickly can cause a drop in blood pressure resulting in dizziness
- Have blood pressure checked monthly
- Many drugs cause low blood pressure
- Drink water: Eight 8 oz. glasses a day (unless advised to limit fluids)
- Change positions slowly; never walk when dizzy

SENSORY DEFICITS

VISION:

- Have yearly eye exams
- Keep glasses clean
- Use night lights and keep areas well lit
- **DO NOT** walk with reading glasses



HEARING:

- Have routine hearing exams
- Clean out excessive ear wax
- Wear hearing aids – don't let vanity get in the way
- Smokers have higher rates of hearing loss



BE KIND TO YOUR FEET

- Nerves in the feet helps maintain balance
 - Neuropathy (diabetes)
 - Peripheral vascular disease (decreases blood flow and sensation in the feet)
- Those with nerve damage need to be extra careful
- Consult podiatrist to help manage foot care for nail trimming, foot pain, bunions, poor fitting shoes, or injuries



FOOT WEAR

- Wear appropriate, comfortable shoes that fit well
- Wear cotton socks and leather shoes that “breathe” and cover entire foot
- Socks and shoes should NOT leave marks on skin when removed
- Heel height not over 1.5 inches
- Heel width = to size of sole
- Non-slippery

SAFE FOOTWEAR

- Slip on loafers
- Oxford tie shoes
- Velcro closure shoes
- Walking sport shoes
- Low heeled pumps



UNSAFE FOOTWEAR

- High-heeled pumps
- Backless slippers or shoes
- Stockings and socks only
- Shoes with slippery leather or sticky crepe soles
- Shoes that are too tight (leave pressure marks on your skin)
- Shoes that are too loose (slip at the heel)



HOME HAZARDS

- Maintain a safe, uncluttered home
- Remove anything that narrows pathways
- Remove tripping hazards:
 - Throw rugs
 - Loose flooring
 - Piles
 - Electrical cords
 - Long hemlines

HOME SAFETY

- Use a nightlight or motion sensor lighting
- Never place items on the stairs
- Don't climb on chairs to reach high objects
- Clean up spills quickly
- Do not lock the bathroom door
- Use hand rails while using stairs

DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK FOR HELP!

Make changes in the home so that daily routines do not require bending, stooping, or reaching overhead.

LINK TO SAFETY

- Accessible phone on each floor of your house; at least one should be accessible from the floor
- Make sure that pull cords are intact and within reach from the floor
- Contact family or friend daily
- Medical alert system
- Know how to get up if you fall



BE PREPARED FOR FALLS

- Keep a current list of medications, name of primary MD, and emergency contacts with you at all times
- Establish a regular exercise routine
- Safely practice getting up from a fall
- Eat healthy, stay hydrated
- Home safety evaluation
- Purchase adaptive home modifications or equipment

GET UP FAST!

- Lying on the floor for longer than 2 hours can be **deadly**
- You can become dehydrated and get infections (such as pneumonia)
- Muscles can deteriorate and give off toxic chemicals that cause kidney failure; pressure sores develop

WHAT TO DO IF YOU FALL

- Don't panic- take a minute to assess the situation
- If you can move without severe pain, attempt to get up using the recommended method
- If you can't get up, call for assistance in any way possible

GETTING UP FROM A FALL

Do not attempt if you are dizzy, unsteady, or in a lot of pain.

- Move to a sitting position on the floor
- Take a few moments to regain composure
- Locate the nearest sturdy chair or piece of furniture
- Roll over onto hands and knees and crawl to a sturdy chair
- Put the strongest leg under the body so that the foot of that leg is on the floor
- Push up using the arms of the chair for support
- Do not attempt to walk until it is safe to do so

