

Falls facts for nurses

Preventing Falls and Harm From Falls in Older People: Best Practice Guidelines for Australian Community Care 2009

Nurses have an important role to play in preventing falls and harm from falls in older people who live in the community. You are well placed to recognise a change in an older person's risk of falling, and therefore can play an integral part in communicating this to all members of the health care team. You are also well placed to prevent falls through a team approach to planning, implementing and evaluating an individualised falls prevention plan.

The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care has produced national falls prevention guidelines for community care, which are designed to inform clinical practice. They will assist health professionals providing community care to develop and implement practices to prevent falls and injuries from falls. Successful falls prevention strategies for older people who live in the community include:

- specific exercise programs
- individualised falls prevention plans using multiple, tailored interventions and based on screening or assessment
- medication review and modification.

What can you do to help?

- Play an active role in developing and implementing a tailored falls prevention plan.
- Encourage older people to undertake specific exercises (targeting strength and balance).
- Recommend an occupational therapist home environment review and interventions for older people who have a high risk of falling.
- Recommend a home safety assessment and modification program for older people with severe visual impairment.

Recommendations from the guidelines

Preventing Falls and Harm From Falls: Best Practice Guidelines for Australian Community Care 2009 recommends falls prevention interventions based on the latest evidence and practice.

Single interventions that are effective in reducing falls include:

- exercise (particularly exercise programs that include balance training)
- vitamin D supplementation (although only in people with low vitamin D levels)
- home safety interventions (again, only in high-risk subgroups of older people).

Multiple interventions tested in Australia that are effective in reducing the *rate* of falls include the following components:

- exercise
- participant education
- home safety.

Multiple interventions with combinations of components that are all effective in reducing the *risk* of falling include:

- exercise and home safety
- exercise and vision assessment
- exercise, vision assessment and home safety.

Multiple interventions as a population-based approach to preventing falls related injury are effective and can form the basis of public health practice.

This fact sheet has been adapted from *Preventing Falls and Harm From Falls in Older People: Best Practice Guidelines for Australian Community Care 2009*, developed by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care.

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1. *Preventing Falls and Harm From Falls in Older People: Best Practice Guidelines for Australian Community Care 2009.*



The following resources have been developed to assist implementation of the Falls Guidelines:

2. *Guidebook for Preventing Falls and Harm From Falls in Older People: Australian Community Care 2009.*
A Short Version of Preventing Falls and Harm From Falls in Older People: Best Practice Guidelines for Australian Community Care 2009.



3. *Fact sheets:*
 - Falls facts for doctors
 - Falls facts for nurses
 - Falls facts for allied health professionals.



All publications are available from the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care website www.safetyandquality.gov.au

Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care
Level 7, 1 Oxford Street
Darlinghurst NSW 2010
Tel: (02) 9263 3633
Email: mail@safetyandquality.gov.au