

Caregiving in
The Comfort of Home®

Caregiver Assistance News

“CARING FOR YOU ... CARING FOR OTHERS”

Back Safety / Falls

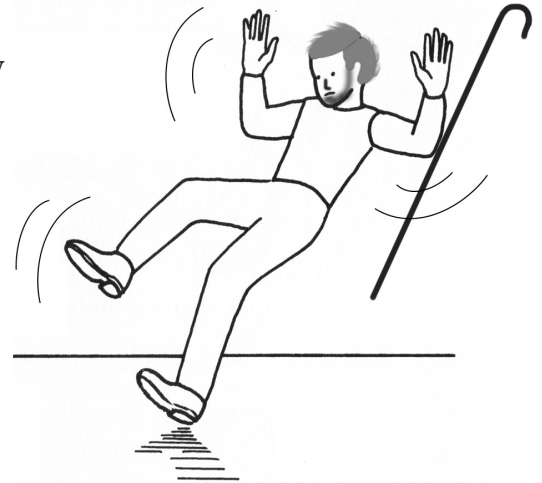
Older adults are at risk of falling because of the effects of medications, slowed reaction times, brittle bones, stiffness, and lack of flexibility and impaired vision. Due to changes in the brain that are caused by Alzheimer's disease (AD), people with AD are at *especially* high risk of falling. Slower reaction time, difficulty recognizing changes in the height or depth of a step, for example, can lead to tripping and falling. Changes in balance and coordination combined with poor memory can make it difficult for a person with AD to both get from one place to another and avoid hazardous objects *at the same time*. He may miss a step while looking for a door or trying to listen to someone's conversation. You can reduce the risk of falling by modifying the environment. Try to help the person in your care remain as active and flexible as possible. It is also important to provide appropriate

footwear and review medications with his doctor.

Fear of Falling

A person with AD, even in the early stages, will have subtle changes in walking ability that will become more severe as time goes on. This can create difficulty with balance. If the person has other illnesses, the problems may be more severe.

It is natural that he will fear falling. To help the person in your care feel more confident, adaptive devices such as walkers or canes can be useful, but you will have to remind him to use these devices. Bring the cane or walker to the person when he has forgotten it. Exercises that you can do with the person in your care



Fall Facts

- ✓ Every second of every day, an older adult (age 65+) suffers a fall in the U.S.—making falls the leading cause of injury and injury death in this age group.
- ✓ Thirty million older adults fall each year—resulting in about 30,000 deaths.
- ✓ Each year, 3 million older adults are treated for a fall injury and at least 300,000 seniors are hospitalized for hip fractures.
- ✓ Women fall more often than men and account for three-quarters of all hip fractures.

Source: CDC.gov

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may improve his balance. Remember, before starting any type of exercise routine, get advice from your physician. Start slowly with only moderate effort. Give him or her time to build strength and stamina. Any amount of exercise helps reduce the risk of falls.

Back Safety - Proper Lifting and Moving

Back injuries are among the most common injuries in caregiving. But sometimes as a caregiver, you will have to help the person in your care move to a chair or be asked to pick up a heavy object. Though this seems like a simple maneuver, it is very easy to be injured doing this and left unable to perform your caregiving duties. A little attention to the safest way to move your body—and the person in your care—will keep you from unnecessary injury. Most muscle strain injuries to both the caregiver and care receiver are preventable if you follow some simple rules.



Body Mechanics

The proper use of our bodies is called *body mechanics*. It involves standing and moving in ways that prevent injury, avoid fatigue, and make the best use of strength. When you learn how to move, control and balance *your* own body, it's easier to control and help or move another person.

General Rules

The following hints will help you use proper body mechanics and be safe. However, caregivers should seek training from a physical therapist to reduce the risk of injury.

- ➔ Only lift as much as you can comfortably handle.
- ➔ Always let the person you are helping know what you are going to do.
- ➔ To create a base of support, stand with your feet 8"–12" apart with one foot a half step ahead of the other.
- ➔ Bend your knees slightly.
- ➔ Keep your spine in a neutral (normal arched curve, not stiff) position while lifting.
- ➔ USE YOUR LEGS instead of your back to do most of the work—leg muscles are stronger than back muscles.
- ➔ If you can adjust the bed, keep the top at about waist level. If it is low or you are tall, put one foot on a footstool to relieve pressure on your lower back.

Taking Care of Yourself— Preventing Back & Neck Pain

Excess weight puts extra stress on back and stomach muscles and on joints. One pound of extra weight puts four extra pounds of stress on knee joints. To prevent injuries to yourself, get plenty of rest and maintain:

- ✓ Good nutrition.
- ✓ Physical fitness.
- ✓ Good body mechanics.
- ✓ A stress management program such as daily meditation.
- ✓ A stretching routine before you lift. It gets blood flowing to the muscles as well as to the discs between the vertebrae in the spine.
- ✓ A back strengthening exercise program.

Do not smoke. Both smoke and nicotine cause your spine to age faster than normal.



Inspiration

*How to apologize: quickly,
specifically, sincerely.*

Live Life Laughing!

Don't worry, a lot of people cry when they cut an onion. The trick is not to form an emotional bond.



Memory Care - Habits

Remember the person's typical habits, likes, and dislikes. Give him the right to say "no" when he doesn't feel like taking a bath or doing something else you ask him to do. If possible, try again later, rather than forcing the issue just because it is a convenient time for you. And sometimes you may need to just let the activity go. Just let it go.

Caregiving in The Comfort of Home®

Our Purpose

To provide caregivers with critical information enabling them to do their job with confidence, pride, and competence.

Ordering Info

From the publishers of

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SAFETY TIPS— If the Person in Your Care Falls

When you suspect a broken bone, follow these steps:

- If the person cannot move or use the injured limb, keep it from moving. Do not straighten a deformed arm or leg.
- Support the injured part above and below the site of the injury by using folded towels, blankets, pillows, or magazines if the person cooperates.
- If the person is face down, and breathing is adequate, leave the person in the same position.
- Keep the person warm with a blanket and make the person as comfortable as possible.
- Call 911.

Source: *Caregiving in the Comfort of Home: A Complete Guide for Caregivers*

NEXT ISSUE... PREPARING THE HOME

Caregiver Assistance News

“ C A R I N G F O R Y O U ... C A R I N G F O R O T H E R S ”

Q U I C K Q U I Z

The main concern in any home is safety. With a little planning, falls and back injuries can be prevented. Answer True or False to the questions below.

1. A person with Alzheimer's, even in the early stages, will have subtle changes in walking ability that will become more severe as time goes on.
T F
2. Changes in balance and coordination combined with poor memory can make it difficult for a person with Alzheimer's to both get from one place to another and avoid hazardous objects *at the same time*.
T F
3. Just a short amount of exercise will *not* help reduce the risk of falls.
T F
4. It is not important to provide appropriate footwear and review medications to reduce falls.
T F
5. Women fall more often than men and account for three-quarters of all hip fractures.
T F
6. If the person cannot move or use the injured limb, keep it from moving. Do not straighten a deformed arm or leg.
T F
7. A little attention to the safest way to move your body—and the person in your care—will keep you from unnecessary injury.
T F
8. USE YOUR LEGS instead of your back to do most of the work—leg muscles are stronger than back muscles.
T F
9. When you learn how to move, control and balance *your* own body, it's easier to control and help or move another person.
T F
10. To help prevent neck and back pain, do not smoke because smoke and nicotine cause your spine to age faster than normal.
T F

Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____