

# YOU CAN PREVENT FALLS

## Introduction

Many individuals are at risk for falling. Stats Canada shows that 1/3 of all seniors will have at least one fall in the next year. Although more than 1/2 of these falls result in minor injuries, the others result in more serious consequences such as sprains, fractures and even death. Many seniors never recover fully and risk chronic conditions, which will impact on their independence.

Fall prevention requires that individuals make changes in their behaviour or environment. Unfortunately many individuals do not find some of these changes acceptable as they feel they will be viewed as old or frail, thus they are putting themselves at risk.

Are you at risk for a fall : (Adapted from : The First Step : Fall Prevention Starts with You, the Burnaby Coalition to Prevent Falls, Fraser Health Authority)

Do you :

- have frequent slips, trips, near falls or falls?
- have difficulty keeping your balance?
- ever feel dizzy?
- have foot problems?
- have weak muscle or stiff joints?
- have to rush to the bathroom?
- have vision and/or hearing difficulties?
- experience difficulty sleeping?
- experience difficulty concentrating?
- experience shortness of breath?
- forget to check for safety hazards in and around your home?
- walk in places that are uneven, slippery or icy?
- take three or more medications?
- drink alcohol frequently?

Summary for Prevention :

- If you are at risk or have had at all, consult a health professional to determine the nature of your fall and physical status
- involve yourself in physical activity - programmes that include strength and mobility training as well as improving balance and endurance have been shown to be effective in reducing falls
- home modifications may be helpful - are there appropriate railings on all your stairwells? (including front steps of older homes), many falls occur in the bathroom area (most grab bars are inexpensive and help the bathtub and toilet areas safer, use a bath seat)
- many individuals would benefit from an assistive device such as a cane or walker
- have assistance for household activities- ie : lawn mowing, snow removal

## Safe Mobility

Walking is a safe, easy and effective form of exercise. This type of exercise can improve your health by providing an increased energy level, improved range of mobility and muscle strength. Mobility aids such as canes, walkers and rollators can reduce the risk of falls and give you the confidence to walk.

Cane - Provides support while walking to reduce stress on the injured limb. If used properly, the cane is generally held in the opposite hand of the injured limb.

Walker -Lightweight aluminum frame provides support on four legs

Rollator - Provides more fluid, steadier and straighter mobility than a cane or rigid walker. A rollator has a built in seat that enables the user to take a break or rest whenever needed.

It is important that mobility aids are correctly fitted for each individual. The proper length and seat height should be customized for each individual in order to maximize the benefits of the mobility aid. Start today, with the properly fitted equipment and enjoy safe mobility! Get active and stay active!