



Falls - Did you know?

- **Are Falls a Risk Factor?** Falls can lead to fractures, disability and death. Falls are known to be the most frequent and serious type of accident for people aged 65 and over. There are said to be some 12,000 falls a year by people aged 65+ which result in death.
- **Where do Falls Happen?** 32% of falls happen in the home, 27% in residential institutions and 40% of falls occur in the street/highway.
- **Why do Falls Happen?** Falls can happen because of frailty, lack of mobility and vision which affects balance. There are other causes. The evidence shows that by improving strength and balance the risk of falls for those aged 65+ can be reduced by 55%. Falls often occur in the home on stairs, steps, when accessing the bath, tripping on rugs and because of wrongly located furniture. A primary cause of falls is people wearing inappropriate footwear.

A high percentage of falls occur when people are involved with long term care in residential institutions or otherwise under the supervision of healthcare providers and hospitals. A primary cause is the lack of resource in the care system resulting in not enough staff being employed for the purpose of preventing falls. Additionally and of those employed they are often not trained to carry out risk assessment resulting in mistakes happening. Falls occur when a person is sometimes transferred from one place to another, elopement when people wander off, particularly relevant with people who suffer from dementia or alzheimers and ending up in situations which create a risk of falling.

- **Are Falls Costly to the NHS and a Burden?** The estimated cost to the NHS because of falls is said to be 6 million pounds a day or 2.3 billion pounds a year.
- **What is being done to prevent falls?** Although the evidence shows that well organised integrated national programmes can reduce the risk of falls, little is being done at national level. That said a lot is being done locally but there is a large variation in the quality of the service programmes.
- **Damages?** If a fall is suffered whilst an elderly person is in the care of a health provider, a care home or a hospital, damages can be recoverable for pain and suffering plus out of pocket expenses. The measure of the damages recoverable depends on the nature of the injury, the extent of the rehabilitation and treatment process and how it has compromised a person's quality of life.

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