Fall Prevention Overview and Facts

Fall prevention is a major component of a patient safety program. A fall is defined as “…an unintended event in which a home care patient comes to rest unintentionally on the ground or other lower level.” Preventing a fall by patients receiving care in the home is a significant challenge as home care staff are not present with the patient around-the-clock. In fact, many of the falls that occur among home care patients are not observed by home care staff. Therefore, preventing a fall is of utmost importance and requires a multifaceted approach. A sample of key components of a home care fall prevention program include:

- Conducting an initial fall risk assessment
- Determining the home care patient’s level of fall risk
- Developing patient-specific fall prevention strategies
- Educating the patient/family about how to implement fall prevention strategies
- Communicating the patient’s fall risk and fall prevention plan of care to others involved in the patient’s care at home
- Reassessing the patient’s fall risk and updating the plan of care as needed

Facts Pertaining to Falls in the Home

- 85% of falls occur in the home.¹
- Falls cause 90% of hip fractures.²
- As many as 20% of hip fracture patients die within a year of their injury.³
Facts Pertaining to Falls in the Home, continued

- Nearly one-third of people age 65 and older experience a fall each year in the U.S.\(^4\),\(^5\)
- Among people 65 and older, falls are the leading cause of injury-related deaths, and they are the most common cause of nonfatal injuries and hospital admissions for trauma.\(^6\)
- In 2004, more than 14,900 people 65 and older died from injuries related to unintentional falls. About 1.8 million people 65 and older were treated in emergency departments for nonfatal injuries from falls, more than 433,000 of whom were hospitalized.\(^6\)
- The total direct cost for falls among older adults in 2000 was about $19 billion and is expected to reach $43.8 billion by 2020, given the growing population of this age group.\(^7\)
- Falls are the leading cause of emergency department visits among children, accounting for an estimated three million visits annually. Infants and children who fall from low heights are at substantial risk for head injuries, while those falling from heights of 10 feet or more may also sustain other, multiple, serious injuries.\(^8\)

Sources


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