

# Staying on Your Feet

## Taking Steps to Prevent Falls

### Speaker's Notes

#### Slide 1

- **Staying on Your Feet-Taking Steps to Prevent Falls** is a public presentation that aims to promote healthy, active aging for older adults living in the community in order to reduce falls and fall-related injuries.
- **The presentation raises awareness that falls are preventable and not a consequence of aging.**
- Falls prevention isn't just about stopping falls before they happen. It's about continuing to enjoy life's simple moments; it's about playing with your grandchildren and keeping up with old friends. **Most of all, falls prevention is about keeping your independence.**

#### Slide 2

- It can happen in an instant: reaching on a wobbly stool for something located on a high shelf, tripping over uneven pavement, slipping on a rug or a patch of ice, or getting up from a bed, a bath, a toilet or a chair. It can happen in a person's home, in the community, while a patient is in an acute care hospital, or as a resident in a long-term care home. There are numerous ways a person can suddenly trip or lose his or her balance, and the result is often an injury, hospitalization – or even death.
- **1 out of 3** Canadians over the age of **65** and **1 out of 2** Canadians over the age of **80** will fall at least once a year.
- Older adults who fall once are more than **2X** as likely to fall again.
- Women are **3X** more likely than men to be hospitalized for a fall.

#### Slide 3

##### GROUP PARTICIPATION:

##### Start by asking by a show of hands:

1. Who has fallen?
  2. Who has had a spouse, relative or friend fall?
  3. Who is afraid of falling?
- Be prepared to respond to the show of hands with, "Wow, it looks like almost everyone had their hand up".
  - That is not surprising since the statistics tell us that 1 and 3 Canadians age 65 years and over fall at least once per year.
  - Does one person want to share their fall story? What happened? What actions have you taken to prevent a fall from happening again?

### **Supportive responses and affirmations:**

- Keep pathways, halls and stairways well lit and free of clutter.
- Ask your healthcare provider about which type of grab bar to use in your bathroom.
- Watch out for ice, cracks and uneven surfaces while walking.
- Have your eyes checked every year. » Wear shoes that support your feet and have a closed heel.
- Avoid rushing and doing too many things at once.

### **Slide 4:**

#### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

- In other words – a slip, a trip, a tumble.
- Falls can happen anytime, anywhere, and can have many causes: tripped over a scatter mat, we thought standing on a stool was as steady as a ladder, rushing to answer the phone, or wearing socks. Sometimes we feel dizzy from getting up too fast, misjudged a step, because it was too dark to see or there was no handrail to grab onto.
- Almost all causes of falls can be prevented.

### **Slide 5:**

#### **If you have had a fall, be sure to tell your healthcare provider.**

- What do you think can cause a fall? Get audience participation.
- Identify some of the causes from stories shared.

### **Slide 6:**

Information in the upcoming slides will help identify strategies to address the common risk factors listed on this slide.

### **Slide 7:**

#### **You can...**

- ✓ TALK about it.
- ✓ TAKE ACTION to prevent falls.
- ✓ Complete the *Checklist to help you prevent falls* to identify your risk factors.
- ✓ Make a plan of things you can do to prevent another fall. This may help you feel more confident and in control in the event of a fall, and will be reassuring to your family and friends.

## Slide 8:

- Introduce SOYF booklet.
- Checklist is found on page 2-3. Explain purpose of the checklist: *The checklist can help you identify the things that put you at risk of falling.*
- Encourage participants to complete the checklist on their own, in pairs or small groups.
- Review the checklist and any questions, comments participants may have after they complete it. “If you answered yes to one or more of the questions found on the checklist, you have identified a personal risk factor(s) for falling”.
- You may wish to discuss common risk factors identified in more detail.

## Slide 9:

Strategies to help you improve your balance and stay active include:

- ✓ See a physiotherapist to assess your balance and prescribe exercises
- ✓ Join an exercise class that focuses on balance exercises (Tai Chi)
- ✓ Do balance and strength exercises 15 minutes each day using the SOYF balance exercise handout
- ✓ Visit [www.preventfalls.ca](http://www.preventfalls.ca) for a list of exercise classes

## Slide 10:

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

- Falling has a lot to do with our balance
- Up to 42% of falls can be prevented by well-designed exercise programs that challenged balance abilities and are undertaken frequently (for more than 2 hours a week over a 6-month period)
- Exercise to improve balance is one of the **BEST** things that you can do to decrease your risk of falling
- Up to 25% of falls among older people can be caused by poor balance or walking style
- Exercise that **challenges** balance reduces falls by up to 42% (Sherrington, 2008)

## Slide 11:

### Enjoy being active 30 minutes or more a day!

- Physical activity that challenges your balance will help prevent a fall.

### You can stay strong and healthy by...

- ✓ Doing Tai Chi
- ✓ Walking
- ✓ Swimming
- ✓ Cycling
- ✓ Exercising in a group

### Physical activity

- maintains leg and hip strength and ankle flexibility

- improves bone strength and slows osteoporosis
- improves balance, coordination and walking patterns
- assists joint movement and stability
- increases cardiovascular stamina

## **Slide 12:**

### **Introduction:**

- Refer to Balance exercises to do in your home on page 8-9 of the SOYF booklet.
- Remind them to see a physiotherapist to assess your balance and prescribe exercises before beginning any exercise program.
- Explain you can do the exercises at home, with friends or share with your fitness leaders at classes.
- Demonstrate each exercise below.

### **STAND WITH ONE FOOT IN FRONT OF THE OTHER (WALK STANCE)**

- Stand with one foot in front of the other (walk stance).
- Stand next to a sturdy table or counter for support.
- Place one foot in front of the other with a 10 cm (4 inch) gap between the toe of your back foot and heel of your front foot.
- Hold for 10 seconds and repeat with other foot in front.

### **For increased difficulty:**

- Use your hands less for support.
- Place your back and front foot closer together.
- Repeat it twice on each leg.
- Slowly walk heel to toe alongside a table or counter.

## **Slide 13:**

### **Medications taken by older adults:**

- Include prescription drugs, over-the-counter medications and herbal or homeopathic remedies such as sleeping pills, anti-depressants, anti-hypertensives and painkillers
- All types of medications have the potential to have side effects and to interact with other medications.
- As we age, many of us take more medications, including over-the-counter products and herbal supplements. Some of these medications, used alone or along with other medications, can contribute to a fall by reducing mental alertness or causing dizziness or a change in blood pressure

### **ABOUT DIZZINESS**

- Tell your doctor if you often feel dizzy or lightheaded. There are many different causes of dizziness, including some medications.
- Ask your healthcare provider to test your blood pressure with you lying down and standing up.

- You may feel dizzy if your blood pressure drops quickly when you get up.
- After lying in bed or sitting in a chair, clench your fists and circle your ankles 10 times, then take your time and get up slowly.
- Dehydration can make you dizzy. Drink 6 to 8 glasses of fluids including water each day, or as directed by your healthcare provider.

### **Slide 14:**

- Medications and their side effects can contribute to falls (Van Pelt, 2012).
- 75% of older adults take one or more prescription drugs, and 25% take five or more drugs regularly (Van Pelt, 2012).

#### **You can...**

- ✓ Have your medications reviewed by your doctor, pharmacist or nurse.
- ✓ Ask your doctor if your medications put you at risk for falling.
- ✓ Talk to your health care provider if you feel dizzy.
- ✓ Limit the use of alcohol as it may interact with your medications.

#### **Why medications put older adults at higher risk:**

- **Age-related changes**
- Amount or dose of a drug.
- Unexpected or harmful effects of drugs.
- Effects of multiple medications.

#### **Age-related changes:**

- Liver function changes will alter drug absorption and metabolism (Huang et al, 2012, p. 361).
- Low body weight increases risk of potential toxicity (Huang et al, 2012, p. 361).
- If you have multiple health conditions, you may react differently to medications than you might have in the past (Huang et al, 2012, p. 361).
- Different health conditions can affect how your body uses medications.
- It can take longer for your body to get rid of a drug as you age, so the effects may last longer (Boyle et al, 2010, p. 584).

### **Slide 15:**

Use the Vitamin D log sheet found on page 11 as a daily reminder and to keep a record of your new vitamin D habit.

Vitamin D is important because it:

- Helps your body absorb calcium and phosphorus, two minerals needed for strong bones and teeth
- Protects against osteoporosis
- Keeps muscles stronger when you exercise

Taking a daily supplement of 1,000 IU vitamin D is the best way to make sure you are getting enough. While your healthcare provider may ask you to take more vitamin D, you should not to take more than 4,000 IUs/day.

Vitamin supplements come in several forms. If you need to, talk to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist about the best type for you.

- Multivitamins may include vitamin D. They often only have 400 IU so you may need to take an additional supplement.
- Liquid Vitamin D is easy to use and can be mixed into drinks. This form needs to be kept in the fridge.
- Capsulated Vitamin D is easier form to swallow as they are made out of a gel.
- Gummy Chews with Vitamin D are very easy to swallow and are recommended for people who can't take capsules or tablets. They come in a variety of flavours.
- Vitamin D Tablets are the most common and cost-friendly form of Vitamin.

## Slide 16:

### Footwear should...

- Fit properly
- Have low wide heels
- Non-slip soles
- Lace-up or velcro
- Worn inside and outside your home

### Foot care

- Check your feet often for corns, open sores, redness, dry skin and thickened nails. Ask for help or use a mirror if needed.
- Wash your feet in warm, not hot water.
- Dry your feet completely after washing, especially between your toes.
- Trim your toenails straight across and not too short.
- Address swollen feet by putting them up on a stool when you sit down.
- See a healthcare professional if you have diabetes, or if you sense pain or any changes in your feet.

## Slide 17

Many factors contribute to falls, and among these, a number of chronic conditions, including arthritis, diabetes and visual impairment, bladder control are associated with increased fall risk.

**Source:** Sibley, K. M., Voth, J., Munce, S. E., Straus, S. E., & Jaglal, S. B. (2014). Chronic disease and falls in community-dwelling Canadians over 65 years old: a population-based study exploring associations with number and pattern of chronic conditions. *BMC Geriatrics*, 14, 22. <http://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2318-14-22> Retrieved here: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3928582/#>

## Slide 18

### You can...

- ✓ Learn as much as you can about your condition.
- ✓ Take care of yourself by eating well, exercising, not smoking and limiting alcohol.

- ✓ Have regular checkups with your doctor.
- ✓ Talk to your health provider, a health agency or a support group.
- Choose a variety of nutritious foods from all four food groups.
- Eat plenty of protein-rich foods every day. Some examples are meat, fish, dairy products, tofu or nuts.
- Stay Hydrated.
- Drink at least nine glasses of fluid each day.
- This may include water, milk, or tea.
- Drink fluids with and between meals, as well as with medications.
- Limit alcohol to no more than one or two drinks a day.

## Slide 19

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

**Your vision may have changed without you noticing. How can you look after your eyes and reduce your risk of falling?**

- ✓ Have your eyes checked every two years by ophthalmologist or optometrist.
- ✓ Have your glasses and eyewear checked annually by your optician.
- ✓ Clean and fix your glasses.
- ✓ Take time to adjust to new lenses and sudden changes of light.
- ✓ Take extra care when wearing bifocal and multifocal glasses, particularly on stairs.

## Slide 20

**Safety equipment can help prevent a fall or protect you if you fall. Here are some common safety equipment used:**

- ✓ Cane
- ✓ Walker
- ✓ Grabber/reacher
- ✓ Medical alarm system
- ✓ Hip protectors
- ✓ Grab bars, raised toilet seats and hand held showers
- ✓ Night lights
- It is important to use safety equipment that meets your needs and fits you correctly.
- Your doctor, nurse, physiotherapist or occupational therapist can help you choose the right equipment.
- Keep your mobility aid with you and within easy reach.
- The rubber tip on your cane should always be in good condition. You can buy ice picks for the winter.
- Hip protectors are pads that are worn over the hips to help protect you from a fracture if you fall.

## Slide 21

- ✓ Remove loose mats and rugs
- ✓ Improve lighting
- ✓ Remove clutter and clean up spills
- ✓ Use hand rails on stairs
- ✓ Use non-slip strips to mark step edges
- ✓ Use the Home Safety Checklist to identify the fall risk in your home

### Hazards and falling:

If you do fall or see a potential hazard, you should report it to your municipality. In Winnipeg call 311.

### How can you minimize hazards and reduce your risk of falling?

- Removing some of the tripping and slipping hazards can reduce your risk of falling.
- Be careful on cracked or uneven sidewalks.
- Always give your full attention to what you are doing.
- Increase lighting and use night lights.
- Have a phone in different rooms.

## Slide 22

\*\*Check with staff where you are presenting regarding their procedures when someone has fallen

- It's important to know how to safely get up from the floor if you have fallen.
- Can share personal story.
- **Provide verbal instruction and have volunteer demonstrate how to get up.**
- Can also demonstrate how to help someone else get up (handout). This resource is downloadable from [www.findingbalancealberta.ca](http://www.findingbalancealberta.ca) in multiple languages. Go to "Practitioner" tab then "Resource Tool Kit" heading then "Campaign Resources" then "Translated Resources".
- May also want to use personal medical alarms if live alone, or carry a cell or cordless phone, **whistle** to get attention.
- Also consider having more than one phone on different levels in your home or in different rooms, like the bedroom and living room.

## Slide 23

- ✓ Complete the *Checklist to help you prevent falls* to identify your risk factors.
- ✓ Make a plan of things you can do to prevent another fall. This may help you feel more confident and in control in the event of a fall, and will be reassuring to your family and friends.

## Slide 24

### Additional:

- Statistics Canada, *Population Projections for Canada, Provinces and Territories 2009 to 2036*. 2010: Ottawa. World Health Organization. *Falls*. 2012 July 21, 2015]; Available from: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs344/en/>.
- Fletcher, P.C., et al. (2010). Risk factors for restriction in activity associated with fear of falling among seniors within the community. *Journal of Patient Safety*, 6(3), 187-91.
- Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, *Winnipeg Health Region Injury Report 2000-2010*.
- Public Health Agency of Canada - Division of Aging and Seniors (2005). *Report on seniors' falls in Canada*.