

Preventing Older Adult Falls and TBI

This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.

Every day, more than 5,000 adults age 65 or older are treated in hospitals for fall-related injuries. In 2005, almost 16,000 older adults died as a result of a fall-related injury. Falls, which can involve a bump or blow to the head, are the leading cause of traumatic brain injury, or TBI.

If you're one of the millions of people in the U.S. who cares for an older adult, you'll want to take every step possible to keep that person safe and well. Falls are preventable, and learning what you can do to help prevent them can have a critical and positive impact.

To help prevent older adults from falling, take the following steps:

- Encourage them to exercise. Exercise that improves leg strength, balance, and mobility can reduce a person's chances of falling. Check with a doctor to see what type of exercise is best.
- Have a healthcare provider do a comprehensive review of all the medications they take, including nonprescription drugs like supplements and cold medicines. Drug interactions or side effects like drowsiness may make falls more likely.
- Schedule a vision check, because poor vision, or eyesight clouded by cataracts or glaucoma, can also increase the likelihood of falling.
- Make home safety improvements. Remove trip hazards, add brighter lighting, and place non-slip mats on shower and bathtub floors.

If the person in your care *does* fall, traumatic brain injury could be a result. Knowing the signs and symptoms of TBI can help you recognize if he or she may have a TBI and need to see a doctor. Some symptoms include:

- Low-grade headache that won't go away
- Having more trouble than usual remembering things or paying attention
- Getting lost or easily confused
- Feeling tired all the time or having a change in sleep patterns
- Loss of balance or feeling light-headed or dizzy
- Increased sensitivity to sounds or lights; and
- Blurred vision or eyes that tire easily.

You can help older adults prevent falls and related injuries. For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/ncipc/preventingfalls.

For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.