



# GLOBAL HEALTH PHARMACY

## *ASK YOUR GLOBAL HEALTH PHARMACIST*

News from your Global Health Education Center

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### **PREVENTING FALLS AS YOU GROW OLDER**

Whether it simply bruises your ego or breaks a bone, taking a fall is no fun. Each year, one in three seniors 65 and older experiences a fall - a number that has grown in recent years. For people in this age group, falling is the leading cause of injury and injury-related deaths.

Whether due to concerns about independence or worrying others, however, fewer than half these people tell the doctor about their falls. But that could add insult to injury because one fall may lead to another.

#### **Don't keep it a secret**

Be upfront with your doctor – and with your Global Health Pharmacist. Provide details about when, where, and how you fell. Your Global Health Pharmacist can help you pinpoint the problem and suggest changes you can make. For starters, falling might be due to:

- 1) An infection
- 2) Vision problem
- 3) A chronic health condition
- 4) Muscle weakness
- 5) A balance disorder
- 6) Medications

#### **Stay healthy**

Fortunately, falls needn't be a fait accompli. Even simple lifestyle changes can make a difference in preventing falls. This includes maintaining good physical condition with exercise, sleep, and nutrition. Also, stay well hydrated with plenty of water. And limit alcohol, which can slow your reflexes and throw you off balance. Wear properly fitting, sturdy shoes with nonskid soles and toss out the floppy slippers and shoes with slick soles.

With your doctor's permission, engage in exercise that improves strength, flexibility, balance, and gait. This might include walking, water workouts, or tai chi – a gentle exercise that involves meditative movements. Is fear of falling keeping you stuck in your chair? Your doctor may suggest physical therapy or a guided exercise program.



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## Review your medications

Here's where your Global Health Pharmacist can really help. Make a list of your medications. Do any make you dizzy or drowsy? Your doctor and your Global Health Pharmacist can review this list with you, discuss any side effects you are having, and decide whether it makes sense to change your medications. Of course, don't make any changes without first having a conversation with your doctor.

## Make changes on the home front

Here are a few more ways to help prevent falls at home:

- 1) Remove throw rugs
- 2) Use nonslip mats in the bathtub and shower
- 3) Clean up spills right away
- 4) Clear newspapers and electrical or phone cords from walkways.
- 5) Put nightlights in hallways, bedrooms, and bathroom
- 6) Keep flashlights in easy-to-reach places
- 7) Turn on lights before going up or down stairs
- 8) Install handrails on both sides of stairways

Has your doctor suggested an assistive device such as a cane or walker – but your pride won't quite allow it? It may help to focus on how this can keep you be more independent. Other assistive devices can also help prevent falls. They include:

- 1) Shower or tub grab bars
- 2) A raised toilet seat with armrests
- 3) A shower seat and hand-held shower nozzle

Remember to check Global Heath Pharmacy for supplies to safe-prof your home. A Global Health Pharmacist can help point you in the right direction.

Nothing herein constitute medical advice, diagnosis or treatment, or a substitute for professional advice. You should always seek the advice of your physician or other medical professional if you have questions or concerns about a medical condition.

### References:

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