



VA
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CARE

Defining
EXCELLENCE
in the 21st Century

What to do when you Fall



VISN 8
Patient Safety Center
Falls Clinic
Located at Hidden River
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Grand Oak Plaza,
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If you are caring
for someone who
just fell...

1. **Check for injury:** Do NOT get the person up until you are certain there is no serious injury.
 - a. Are they breathing?
If not, call 911.
 - b. Are they bleeding? Put pressure on the site of the bleeding and call for help.
 - c. Did they lose consciousness?
Are they more confused?
 - d. Where do they hurt? If light touch increases the pain, there may be a fracture.
2. **Do NOT attempt to lift the person by yourself.** If you try to lift the person by yourself, this may injure *both* of you.
3. **Call for help.** Keep a list of friends, neighbors, church members and emergency numbers near your phone.

If You Fall
At Home...

1. **Don't panic. Remain calm and determine if you are hurt.**



2. **Roll over slowly and try to sit up. Moving slowly will help prevent dizziness.**



3. **Look for the nearest sturdy couch, bed, or chair, preferably in a carpeted area. Slide, crawl or scoot towards it. Avoid trying to get up in the**

bathroom where surfaces are hard and can be slippery.



4. Kneel if you can, getting up on one knee at a time.



5. Then, stand up using your stronger leg, and use the sturdy chair, couch or bed for support.



6. Turn carefully, and sit down.



If you cannot get up: Call for help. If you are alone, crawl slowly to the telephone and call 911 or relatives. It is important to keep at least one phone where it can be reached from the floor.

If you cannot move to a sitting position: keep warm by wrapping yourself in any nearby furniture covers, pillows, towels, jackets, comforter or other available material. Call or yell for help if possible.

Treat ALL falls as serious! Call your doctor or physical therapist *even if you were not hurt*. A fall can be a symptom of serious problems. Your doctor or physical therapist can offer advice and assistance on preventing future falls.

4. Reassure the person. They may be confused, frightened or embarrassed. If possible, provide a cover for them. Stay with them until help can arrive.

5. Ask for details about the fall from anyone else that may have witnessed it.

6. Tell the health care team about falls.

A fall can be a symptom of serious problems. Most falls can be prevented. The doctor, nurse and physical therapist can offer advice and assistance on preventing future falls.

Information provided by:

- *VISN 8 Patient Safety Center Falls Clinic*
- *Age Concern Scotland and American Physical Therapy Association (APTA)*
- *Brewer, K. (2001). Clinical tips: Preventing falls in the elderly. Geriatrics, 8(6), 28.*

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