

BRAIN BOOSTER

BY FUSION

**PREVENTING FALLS IN
THE ELDERLY**

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PREVENTING FALLS IN THE ELDERLY: NUTRITION, HYDRATION & ACTIVITY

Learn how good nutrition, proper hydration, and regular activity work together to prevent falls and support strength, balance, and wellbeing in older adults.



Falls represent the most serious and frequent type of accident in people aged 65 and over. Furthermore, falls are the main cause of disability and the leading cause of death from injury among people aged 75 and over in the UK (Age UK). Many falls are preventable.

People aged 65 and older have the greatest risk of falling, with one third of those older than 65, and half of those older than 80 falling at least once a year.

Source: GOV.UK - “Falls: Applying All Our Health”

Falling is a cause of distress, pain, injury, fear, loss of confidence and self-esteem, increased care needs, hospital admissions, and mortality.

Exercise

- Weak muscles and poor balance will increase the risk of falls. Any regular physical activity is beneficial, but exercise programmes should focus on muscle strengthening and balance improvement (NICE, 2013).
- Exercise such as muscle strengthening or balance can be effective in reducing falls, but only when used in conjunction with other interventions.
- Taking part in daily physical activity will keep muscles and bones strong to help maintain balance and movement; even small amounts of exercise can help reduce the risk of falling through differing types of activities such as daily walks, dancing, gardening, keep fit exercises or swimming.



Moving Around

It is important for people to go at their own pace when moving around to help reduce the risk of falling:



- When getting up from a seated position, residents should hold onto the arms of the chair and make sure that weight can be transferred evenly onto both feet on standing.
- Before starting to walk, the resident should take time to get their balance.



- **Equipment can help with moving around safely and independently and if using a walking aid, make sure it is within easy reach and use it to support standing up.**
- **Residents should be encouraged to use grab rails in the bathroom and handrails along corridors wherever possible.**
- **When walking, taking steps of similar length, and lifting feet clear of the floor. Taking seated rest breaks along the way, will manage energy and residents will not get tired.**
- **Physiotherapists and Occupational Therapists can complete assessments to determine if a personal mobility aid (walking stick, frame, or wheeled walking frame) would be beneficial.**
- **Check any equipment for wear and tear and that it is in good working order.**

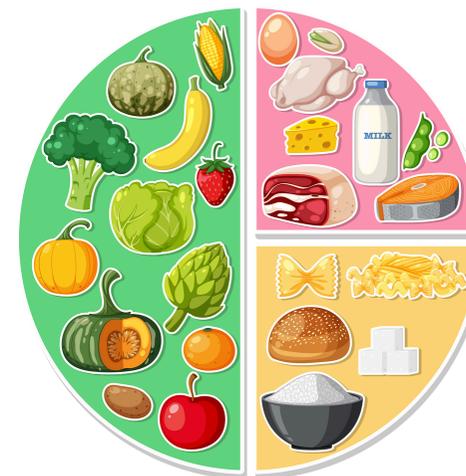
Staff should observe residents using mobility aids to ensure they are used correctly i.e. they are at the correct height for the resident, and the residents own equipment – mobility aids must not be shared.

Ferrules (the rubber feet on walking sticks and zimmer frames) should be replaced if worn.

Eating & Drinking

Nutrition:

Eating a nutritionally balanced diet, which includes vitamin-rich food can help to promote good health. This supports maintaining a healthy weight and helps keep muscles strong and bones and joints supple.



Hydration:

Drinking plenty of water and non-alcoholic drinks is important for good health and can help prevent some of the problems that increase the risk of falling, such as dehydration, tiredness, feeling light-headed and fatigue.

Too much alcohol can cause drowsiness, and a decreased perspective and spatial awareness which can reduce judgement and therefore increase the risk of falling. Fluids should be encouraged and a variety of flavour options made available to encourage good intake.



To ensure good nutrition and hydration:



- For those residents who have difficulties with memory, show plates should be used to display the food prior to serving to ensure that residents have sufficient choice on what they would like to eat.

- There must be a lidded jug of fresh water and an appropriate drinking vessel in each resident's room and jugs of water / juice / squash etc. should be present in all sitting areas for residents.
- Snacks and drinks must be always available for all residents throughout the day and night.
- Before a resident begins to eat their food / meal or drink staff must ensure that the resident is correctly positioned (sat upright), the food and drink are the correct consistency, and any support is given according to the resident's care plan

Residents may need to be supported with their nutrition and hydration needs. This could range from staff simply supporting a resident to make choices from the menu through to physically supporting them to eat and drink. All resident's nutrition and hydration needs should be clearly care planned for all staff to access and understand the person - centred requirement for each individual.

Over to you:

Documentation:

- Do the care records accurately reflect the resident's current mobility requirements?
- Is there evidence of the physical activity they can do and wish to participate in?
- Are seated exercise's available for those residents who are unable to stand independently
- Are additional care plans in place for residents who require additional support with nutrition & hydration?
- Have referrals been made to support residents with their physical activity and nutrition & hydration needs where required?

In summary, effective fall prevention in care homes depends on a comprehensive, person-centred strategy. Regular assessments of residents' vision and hearing, combined with the use of appropriate, well-fitting footwear and good nutrition/hydration play a crucial role in reducing fall risks. By fostering awareness among care staff, maintaining safe environments, encouraging activity and implementing ongoing falls prevention training, care homes can enhance resident safety, promote independence, and improve overall quality of life.