

**Falls in Older People – 65+**

- 75% of injury related hospital admissions
- 50% of those who fall will have another fall within 12 months
- Most common cause of accidental death of those aged 75 or older

**Actions to prevent falls**

Medication review  
Vitamin D supplement  
Consider treatment for osteoporosis  
Safety in home (check for hazards)

**Assessment**

- Head injury with loss of consciousness
- Lying on floor for longer than an hour
- Suspected hip fracture (cannot bear weight due to pain)
- Suspected heart problem
- Other medical problem

**Opportunistic Screening**

Doctor or nurse should ask:

- Falls in the past 12 months?
- How often, where?
- Nutrition and fluid intake?
- Physical activity?
- Vision?
- Blood pressure? (lying and standing)

**Clinical Assessment**

- Falls and bone health history
- Assess walking pattern and balance; check feet
- Lying and standing blood pressure
- Thinking processes
- Visual clarity
- Weight, diet, hydration
- Medication history

**Record falls and bone health history**

- How often and the circumstances
- Symptoms at the time of the fall
- Loss of consciousness
- Ability to get off the floor

**Check for postural hypotension –**  
a drop in blood pressure when a person moves from lying to sitting or sitting to standing

**Assess gait and balance**

- Without using arms, get up from chair, walk and return to chair
- When standing, turn around and face the other way

**Neurological assessment**

- Coordination
- Leg strength
- Reflexes
- Sensation in feet
- Balance
- Mental abilities

**Classification of falls**

**Suspected medical problems**

- Dizziness
- Light headed
- Vertigo
- Blackouts
- Unexplained falls

**Recurrent falls**  
More than 1 in the past 12 months OR  
a fall with gait balance problem

**Single or isolated fall with normal gait/balance**

**Palmerston North & Manawatu Patients** are referred to ElderHealth for a comprehensive assessment

**Horowhenua Patients** are referred to the Horowhenua Health of Older Persons team for a comprehensive assessment

**Tararua Patients** are referred to the Tararua Health of Older Persons team for a comprehensive assessment

Review annually (older people should always be asked about their history of falls)

**Targeted medication review:**  
Is the patient on:

- four or more prescriptions at once?
- antihypertensives?
- antipsychotics?
- oral steroids?
- anticoagulants?
- diuretics?