

Caregiving in
The Comfort of Home®

Caregiver Assistance News

“CARING FOR YOU ... CARING FOR OTHERS”

High Blood Pressure – Falls

Falls are serious at any age, but especially for older people who are more likely to break a bone when they fall. Falls are the most common cause of nursing home placement. The risk of falling increases with age. Keep in mind, falls and accidents seldom “just happen.”

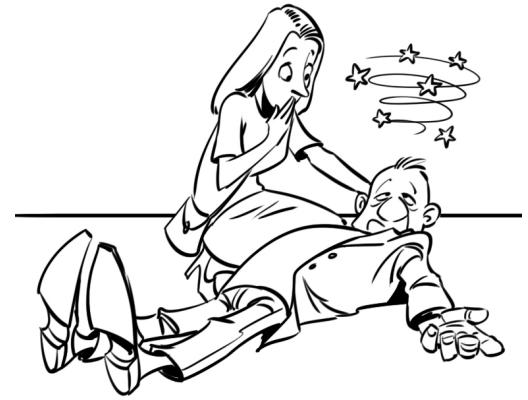
Medicines that lower blood pressure can cause balance problems and dizziness, leading to falls and injuries. High blood pressure affects many older people, whose bones tend to be weaker, and for whom a fall injury—such as a broken bone—can have serious health consequences.

High blood pressure (140/90 mmHg or higher) is referred to as “the silent killer” because it usually has no specific symptoms and no early warning signs. Both you and the senior in your care should have blood pressure checked regularly.

Researchers studied whether there was any link between the number of people taking blood pressure drugs and the number of people who had serious falls. Compared with people *not* taking blood pressure drugs, those taking the drugs were more likely to have a serious fall. But remember, you or the person in your care, should **NEVER change medications without the doctor’s advice.**

Regular exercise as well as regular eye and physical exams may help reduce the risk of falling. Getting rid of tripping hazards in the home will also help. Getting enough calcium and

vitamin D reduces the chances of breaking a bone if a fall does occur. If the person in your care has osteoporosis, they are more likely to break a bone if they fall. Osteoporosis is called the “silent disease” because bones become weak with no symptoms. People often find out they have it when a strain, bump, fall, or even a cough causes a bone to break. Suggest the person in your care get tested.



Preventing Falls

To reduce the risk of falls:

- Use a cane or walker, if needed
- Wear low-heeled rubber soled shoes that don’t slip and do *not* walk in socks, stockings, or slippers
- Walk on grass when sidewalks are slick
- Put salt or kitty litter on icy sidewalks
- Keep floors free of clutter
- Be sure rugs have skid-proof backs
- Stairs should be well lit with hand rails on both sides
- Put grab bars on bathroom walls near tub, shower, and toilet
- Use a nonskid bath mat in the shower or tub
- Keep a flashlight next to the bed
- Keep rooms well lit

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Fainting

Fainting can be caused by—

- a heart attack and a change in blood pressure
- medications
- low blood sugar and standing up quickly
- straining to have a bowel movement
- dehydration



Sometimes, fainting can be prevented:

- Ask the doctor if medications that do not cause fainting can be prescribed.
- Monitor blood sugar levels.
- Monitor blood pressure.
- Avoid constipation.
- Do not let the person stand up or sit up too rapidly.

If a fainting spell occurs:

1. Do not try to place the person in a sitting position. Instead, immediately lay him down flat.
2. Check the person's airway, breathing, and pulse.
3. Turn the person on his side.
4. Elevate the legs.
5. Cover him with a blanket if the room or floor is cold.
6. Do not give fluids.
7. Call 911 if person is having difficulty breathing or is not breathing or not responding to your voice and touch.
8. If not breathing, be prepared to give Rescue Breathing and start CPR as instructed in CPR class.

Source: *The Comfort of Home for Chronic Heart Failure: A Guide for Caregivers*

NOTE – Ladies, Don't Delay in Going to the Hospital

One of the reasons **women die more often than men following a heart attack** is that women wait longer to go to the hospital. More heart muscle has already died by the time they receive treatment.

Source: *Strong Women, Strong Hearts* by Miriam E. Nelson, PhD.; Penguin Group

Taking Care of Yourself— A Bad Marriage Can Lead to a Broken Heart

A study of married couples in their 70s and 80s shows that older couples in an unhappy marriage have a higher risk of heart disease. Negative marriage qualities—such as having a critical spouse—have a bigger effect on heart health than positive marital qualities. The study concluded that being in an unhappy marriage caused stress, which can be harmful to cardiovascular health. The study emphasizes the need for marriage counseling as marriages grow older, not just in their early stages.

Source: theglobeandmail.com



NOTE - *Dizziness* can mean different things—balance problems, feeling faint, light-headed, weak, or unsteady. Some causes are minor problems, some are serious and even life-threatening. If you feel dizzy regularly and you do not know why you are dizzy, you should see your doctor to get it checked out.

Live Life Laughing!

I once told my physical therapist I broke my arm in two places, and he just told me to stop going to those places!



Inspiration

We delight in the beauty of the butterfly, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty.

—Maya Angelou

Memory Care - Falls

About one in every four seniors falls at least once a year, and it's even more common for people who have Alzheimer's disease. The main thing to watch for is any sign that the senior's condition is worse after a fall.

Caregiving in The Comfort of Home®

Our Purpose

To provide caregivers with critical information enabling them to do their job with confidence, pride, and competence.

Ordering Info

From the publishers of

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Comments and suggestions welcome.

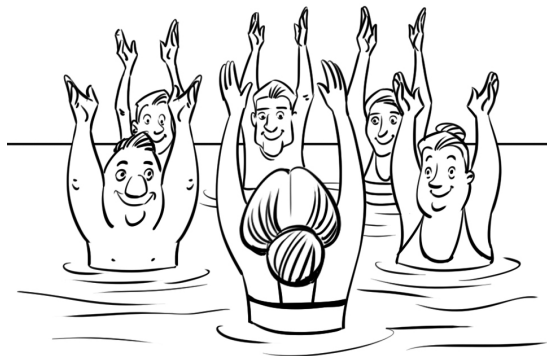
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SAFETY TIPS– Water Therapy

Water therapy is a time-tested form of healing. It is also a safe way for a senior or a person with a disability to exercise because there is no danger of falling. Floating in water allows easy movement and little strain on joints and muscles.

Using a kickboard or simply walking in place in water may produce aerobic benefit. Water also resists movement, so it produces increased heart rate in less time. Water can also be a good place to exercise for those with balance problems. Talk to a physical therapist about whether a water aerobics class might be appropriate for the person in your care. YMCAs often offer water aerobics classes for people of all abilities.



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“ C A R I N G F O R Y O U ... C A R I N G F O R O T H E R S ”

Q U I C K Q U I Z

Even falls without a major injury can cause an older adult to become fearful or depressed, making it difficult for them to stay active. Answer True or False to the questions below.

1. High blood pressure is referred to as “the silent killer” because it usually has no specific symptoms and no early warning signs.
T F
2. High blood pressure affects many older people, whose bones tend to be weaker, and for whom a fall injury—such as a broken bone—can have serious health consequences.
T F
3. You, or the person in your care, should NEVER change medications without the doctor’s advice.
T F
4. Fainting is never caused by dehydration or standing up quickly.
T F
5. *Dizziness* can mean different things—balance problems, feeling faint, light-headed, weak, or unsteady.
T F
6. *Water therapy* is a safe way for a person with a disability to exercise because there is no danger of falling.
T F
7. Regular exercise, as well as regular eye and physical exams, may help reduce the risk of falling.
T F
8. It is *not* important for seniors to have their blood pressure checked regularly.
T F
9. An unhappy marriage can cause stress, which can be harmful to cardiovascular health.
T F
10. Falls are serious at any age, but especially for older people who are more likely to break a bone when they fall.
T F

Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____