

September is Fall Prevention Month

As We Enter the Fall Season, Let's Do Our Best to Prevent Falls

What is a fall? A fall is any situation in which someone descends (or falls) suddenly and involuntarily toward a lower surface or the ground (DBHDS, 2016).

Why do individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities fall? The reasons may be related to physical factors, environmental factors, impaired cognitive processing, and/or neurologic factors, and/or a combination of the above (Hsieh, Rimmer & Heller, 2012).

Can behavioral challenges be a component to why a person falls? Yes. An individual might exhibit a behavior that causes a fall, but an individual might also, "pretend to fall". A pretend fall is not one in which "someone descends (or falls) suddenly and involuntarily toward a lower surface or the ground." If a pretend fall is suspected, a consultation with a behavioral specialist is recommended (DBHDS, 2016).

A National Resource!

The CDC created **STEADI (Stopping Elderly Accidents, Deaths, & Injuries)**, an initiative, for caregivers who care for individuals who are at risk of falling, or who may have fallen in the past. <https://www.cdc.gov/steady/about.html> (CDC, 2019a).

Which factors put individuals with intellectual disabilities at greatest risk for falls (Hsieh, Rimmer & Heller, 2012)?

- A history of seizures.
- A history of a previous fall.
- Gender (females are at highest risk).
- Skeletal problems (osteoporosis, etc.)
- A history of arthritis.
- Taking 4 or more medications.
- The use of walking aids and other Durable Medical Equipment (DME).
- The effects of aging (loss of musculature, etc.)
- A history of visual and/or hearing loss.
- Other health issues such as neurological disorders, diabetes, low blood sugar, low blood pressure.
- A history of poor balance or vertigo.
- Weakness or fatigue due to an illness.
- A cluttered living environment or area rugs.
- Poor lighting.
- Wet/slick flooring surfaces.
- Substance abuse (alcohol, etc.).

What can we do?

- 1) If you observe any of these risk factors, the first step towards safety is to consult the individual's primary care provider (PCP).
- 2) Include a discussion about these risk factors with the individual and their support team at the annual ISP meeting (DBHDS, 2016).

Resources & References:

- Centers for Disease Control (2019a). About CDC's STEADI. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/steady/about.html>
- Centers for Disease Control (2019b). What you can do to prevent falls. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/homeandrecreationalafety/falls/adultfalls.html>
- Hsieh, K., Rimmer, J., & Heller, T. (2012). Prevalence of falls and risk factors in adults with intellectual disability. *American journal on intellectual and developmental disabilities*, 117, 442-454.
- National Council on Aging (2019). National falls prevention resource center. Retrieved from <https://www.ncoa.org/center-for-healthy-aging/falls-resource-center/>
- Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS), Commonwealth of Virginia Government (2016). Orientation manual for direct support professionals (DSPs) and supervisors: Supporting people in their homes and communities [Brochure]. Richmond, VA: Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS), Commonwealth of Virginia Government.

The 2nd Annual Statewide Nursing Meeting Sponsored by Region 3 REACH Supported by DBHDS

Date: Tuesday, October 22, 2019

Location: New River Valley Community Services 401 West Main Street, Radford, Va. 24141

Time: 9:00 am to 4:30 pm - Doors open at 8:30 for registration

Cost: "Early Bird" Registration - \$25.00 Registration after August 31, 2019 - \$30.00

Registration link: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-2nd-annual-statewidenursing-meeting-tickets-66705968347>

Event registration: Closes on October 8, 2019. No refunds available. Registration can be transferred to another person.

Seating: Limited to the first 100 registered persons.

Special rate hotel accommodations: \$70/night on Monday, October 21, 2019 and/or Tuesday, October 22, 2019, The Best Western - 1501 Tyler Ave, Radford, VA. 24141 540-639-3000, Request "Statewide Nurses Meeting" for special rate.

Registration fee includes: Breakfast and coffee (bagel trays and fresh fruit), vendor tables, and lunch catered by Moe's Southwest Grill (gluten friendly and vegetarian options available). See <https://www.moes.com/nutrition> for more allergy/diet information.

Any questions or concerns regarding this event: Please contact Marylou Bryan at marylou.bryan@dbhds.virginia.gov, Melissa Blevins at melissa.blevins@dbhds.virginia.gov and/or Carrie Browder at cbrowder@nrvc.org.



Mobile Rehab Engineering (MRE) Fall Prevention Tips For Patient Lifts



Falls from patient lifts can cause injuries including head trauma, fractures and death. Follow these safety tips to lower the risk of falls from patient lifts.

- Read and follow the manufacturer's instructions for safe use. Most accidents can be avoided if proper procedures are followed.
- Get training from a qualified Physical Therapist (PT) or Occupational Therapist (OT) before operating a lift.
- Be aware that most lifts require two or more caregivers to safely operate.
- Only use a sling specifically designed for the lift you are using.
- The use of a lift should be avoided if the individual is agitated, resistant or combative.
- Using the wrong sling or attaching the sling incorrectly may cause an accident that can result in serious injury or death.
- Do not use a lift to transport an individual, unless the lift is specifically designed for transport.
- Test lift controls before bringing the lift to the individual. Make sure the emergency release feature works.
- Check lift and sling weight limits. Ensure that the individual's weight does not exceed the limits.
- Examine sling and attachment areas for tears, holes and frayed seams. DO NOT USE a sling with any signs of wear.
- Do not ever leave the individual unattended while in the lift sling.
- Never keep the individual suspended in a lift sling for more than a few minutes (KwikPoint and the United States Food and Drug Administration, n.d.).

References:

Freepik (2019). Tips graphics. [image]. Retrieved from <https://www.freepik.com/free-photos-vectors/tips>

KwikPoint and the United States Food and Drug Administration (n.d.). Patient lifts: Safety guide. Retrieved from <https://www.fda.gov/files/medical%20devices/published/Patient-Lifts-Safety-Guide.pdf>

Muscular Dystrophy Association (2019). Portable lifts: A real pick-me-up for caregivers. [image]. Retrieved from <https://www.mda.org/quest/article/portable-lifts-real-pick-me-caregivers>