

Office of Integrated Health
Health Information in a Nutshell

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Preventing Falls

There are many different reasons a person with intellectual and developmental disabilities may fall. The reasons may be related to physical factors or environmental factors. Physical factors may include: poor vision, neurological disorders, unsteady gait, poor balance and weak muscles, and poor judgement in knowing the difference between safe and dangerous activities. Environmental factors that can increase the risk for fall may include: slippery floors, loose carpets or unstable rugs, poor lighting, poorly fitting footwear, lack of surfaces to grab, seat heights that are too low, and improper utilization or poor repair of canes, walkers, and wheelchairs. (http://www.idph.state.il.us/idhp/idhp_Falls.htm)

Preventing Falls

The goal of preventing falls should focus on minimizing the risk of falls and the risk of injurious falls, while still maintaining individual independence. The first step in preventing a fall is assessing if the individual is at risk; be sure to do an environmental assessment. Then, staff should let all persons involved in care of the individual know that they may have a certain level of risk for falls. They may need to involve certain measures to limit and reduce to risk of fall.

After a Fall

Seek immediate care if any injury is suspected such as, head injury, broken bones, traumatic brain injuries, etc.

Recommendations

Awareness of risk is important. Be alert to symptoms of changes in a person's health status and seek guidance from a health professional for any changes. With a change in any person's health status, results in acute care through an ED visit, Urgent Care visit, or hospitalization, be sure to follow up on any recommended changes from the PCP or licensed provider.

Resources

Having properly working mobility equipment and assistive devices is imperative for reducing risk of falls. DBHDS, Office of Integrative Health has a Mobile Rehab Engineering (MRE) program, which ensures that individuals who rely on durable medical equipment, such as wheelchairs, shower chairs or other mobility equipment and have access to maintenance and repair services that do not already exist. Information can be found at:

<http://www.dbhds.virginia.gov/individuals-and-families/office-of-integrated-health>.

http://www.idph.state.il.us/idhp/idhp_Falls.htm
