



## Purpose

The purpose of this Alert is to raise awareness about fall risk factors, provide resources and strategies to prevent falls.

Persons with developmental disabilities may be at increased risk for falls due to things such as cerebral palsy, osteoporosis, epilepsy and the effects of some medications. Falls may result in fractures or other injuries, isolation and even death. There are some very easy and practical things that you can do to prevent falls and the possibility of injury.

All DD Employees are required to be trained, annually, on identification and reporting of Major Unusual Incidents and Unusual Incidents prior to unsupervised contact. This training includes the review of any **Health and Welfare Alerts** released since the previous calendar year's training.

For questions / comments, please contact the MUI/Registry Unit at (614) 995-3810.

*The Facts about Falling* According to the Center for Disease Control falls are the leading cause of death among all age groups except youths 15-24. In Ohio, falls are the leading cause of injury related hospitalizations and Emergency Room visits for all ages. Statewide data collected from the Incident Tracking System show 764 fall related injuries reported as MUIs in 2013. Fall-related deaths accounted for deaths of 6 individuals with disabilities last year. Most of these falls occurred at the person's home.

*Fall Prevention is important for all of us.* Falls and fall-related injuries are a significant issue for individuals with developmental disabilities. In addition to the significant risk of injury, falls impact an individual's quality of life, ability to work and level of independence. While environmental factors play a role in falls so does a person's age, medical conditions and medications.

*Always seek immediate medical care after an individual has fallen.*

### Individual Risk Factors:

- Lower extremity weakness, upper extremity, or one sided muscle weakness
- Balance disorders
- Ambulation/Gait difficulties
- Visual deficits (cataracts, change in vision)
- Use of sedative – hypnotic medications; use of four or more medications including prescribed medication and over the counter medications
- Functional and cognitive impairments
- Psychotropic medications
- Age
- Seizure disorder
- Chronic or acute pain
- Blood pressure, blood thinning and other medications that can cause dizziness when getting up due to a temporary drop in blood pressure upon standing (postural hypotension)

### Environmental Risk Factors:

- Poor lighting
- Slippery floor surfaces or changes in floor surface (g., from carpet)
- Transfers/pivots
- Stairs - Lack of handrails
- Wires, light cords or other objects on floor causing trip hazards

Environmental Risk Factors continued:

- Ill-fitting or untied shoes or ill-fitting pants
- Eye glasses that may be foggy or not clean making it hard to see

Medical Factors:

- Age
- Functional/cognitive impairments
- Seizure disorder
- Balance assessment
- Vision and hearing checked
- Co-morbidities
- Multiple diagnoses can mean multiple medications which increases risk for falls and



STEADY U Ohio is a statewide collaborative falls prevention initiative, supported by **Ohio government and state business partners** to ensure that every county, every community and every Ohioan knows how they can prevent falls, one step at a time. Learn more by going to [www.steadyu.ohio.gov](http://www.steadyu.ohio.gov)



**Preventing Falls...  
One Step at a Time**

**Fall Prevention Starts with You!**

- Model good safety habits such as taking your time, holding the hand rail and participating in regular exercise
- Provide the individual's physician with information about falls, medical history or known risk factors (age, medications, seizure disorder, vision)
- Discuss fall prevention and needed supports at team meetings
- Encourage exercise and movement to increase balance and flexibility
- Review a list of the individual's medications with their physician and/or pharmacist as some medication or a combination may contribute to falling
- Provide the proper level of supervision
- Have a positive mindset. Use phrases like "Let's get strong together"
- Use adaptive equipment such as walkers, wheelchairs, gait belts and lifts as ordered
- Encourage the use of eye glasses and other items which will help a person see more clearly
- Have a mobility assessment completed by a professional
- Explore environmental modifications such as grab bars, increased lighting to help maintain safety and independence
- Identify any trip hazards and make sure they are corrected
- Provide Staff Training on safe and healthy work and personal habits
- Visit [www.steadyu.ohio.gov](http://www.steadyu.ohio.gov) for regular updates and to subscribe to Daily Fall prevention tips

**More Info:**

<http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Falls/adultfalls.html>

<http://www.healthy.ohio.gov/vipp/data/datapub.aspx>

[http://www.mainehealth.org/mh\\_body.cfm?id=432](http://www.mainehealth.org/mh_body.cfm?id=432)

<https://wihealthyaging.org/stepping-on>

[www.steadyu.ohio.gov](http://www.steadyu.ohio.gov)

<http://www.delawarecreativehousing.com/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

**For Questions or Comments**

For questions or comments regarding this alert, please contact the MUI/Registry Unit.

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