What *You* Should Do If You Fall...

In spite of the best efforts of you and your caregivers, you may fall. If so, it is very important you tell someone. There are certain things your caregiver needs to know, such as:

- **Any symptoms you had before the fall.**
- **Any pain or injuries that happened because of the fall.**
- **Any contributing factors to the fall, such as:**
  - ⇒ Wet floors or unlocked wheelchairs
  - ⇒ What you were doing when you fell

This information will help you and your caregiver to learn the reason you fell. It will also help in planning your care to prevent another fall.

You can decrease your risk of injury during a fall by remembering to:

- ♦ **Relax** – do not stiffen or tense your muscles
- ♦ **Absorb** – let your arms and legs "give" like a spring to cushion the impact of the fall
- ♦ **Roll** – or move in the direction of the fall to reduce injury

If you have questions or concerns about preventing falls, please talk to your primary care provider.

VA Butler Healthcare

... providing quality health care to our nation's Veterans.

Our Primary Care VA Outpatient Clinics

Armstrong Co. VA Outpatient Clinic
Klingensmith Building
313 Ford Street, Suite 2B
Ford City, PA 16226
724-763-4090

Clarion Co. VA Outpatient Clinic
AC Valley Medical Center
855 Route 58, Ste. One
Parker, PA 16049
724-659-5601

Cranberry Twp. VA Outpatient Clinic
Freedom Square
1183 Freedom Road, Ste. A101
Cranberry Township. PA 16066
724-741-3131

Lawrence Co. VA Outpatient Clinic
Ridgewood Professional Centre
1750 New Butler Road
New Castle, PA 16101
724-598-6080

Michael A. Marzano VA Outpt. Clinic
295 North Kerrwood Dr., Ste. 110
Hermitage, PA 16148
724-346-1569

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VA Butler HEALTHCARE

Fall Prevention

Guidelines *to* Help Protect

You & Your Loved Ones

VA Butler Healthcare
325 New Castle Road
Butler, PA 16001
***Toll-free:* 1-800-362-8262**
***Direct dial:* 724-287-4781**
***Facebook:* http://www.facebook.com/VAButlerPA**
***Twitter:* http://twitter.com/VAButlerPA**

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Making Lives Better©

Each year, thousands of older Americans fall at home. Falls may have serious or fatal outcomes. More than one-third of people aged 65 and older fall each year, and those who fall once are two to three times more likely to fall again.

Some Facts about Falls

- **20 to 30 % of older adults who fall are injured**
- **6 % of falls result in a serious injury such as a broken hip**
- **40 % of older adults who break a hip will die within six months**
- **Falls are the second leading cause of accidental death among the elderly**

VA Butler wants to help prevent YOU or a loved one from becoming part of these statistics.

It's important to remember common medications can increase your risk of falling...

Some of these include:

- Antihistamines for allergies
- Benzodiazepines for anxiety or sleep
- Blood pressure lowering agents
- Antiseizure medications
- Medicines used to treat depression
- Medicines used to treat other mental health conditions

If you want to know whether one of your medicines is making you more likely to fall, please ask your primary care provider or your pharmacist.

Stay Safe! Prevent Falls

Risk *for* Falls *is* Predictable

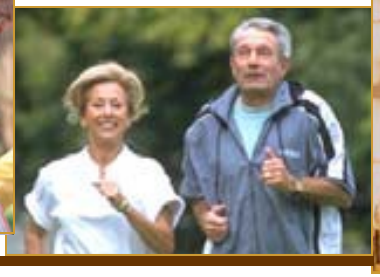
To find out if you are at risk for falling, answer "**yes**" or "**no**" to the following:

1. I have fallen before.
2. I find it harder to walk, transfer, bathe, dress, or go to the bathroom.
3. My hearing and/or vision are worse than they used to be.
4. I take medicine for high blood pressure, fluid, sedation, sleep, heart, blood sugar, blood thinning, mood and/or nerves.
5. I am dizzy, weak, or unsteady, even occasionally.
6. I have a hard time thinking clearly or making decisions.
7. I need aids such as a wheelchair, cane, walker, or artificial limb.
8. I am 65 years of age or older.

If you answered yes to any of the above statements, you are at risk for falling. If you answered yes to many of the statements, do not be surprised. Many medical problems are common in older adults.

How To Prevent Falls At Home

Half of all falls happen at home.

To make your home safer:

- Remove throw rugs or use double-sided tape to keep rugs from slipping
- Remove things you can trip over (like papers, books, clothes, and shoes) from stairs and places where you walk
- Use non-slip mats in the bathtub and on shower floors
- Have grab bars put in next to your toilet and shower and put handrails on all staircases
- Tape loose or long cords to the floor
- Make sure furniture is stable if you use it for support when walking and keep drawers and cabinet doors closed
- Improve the lighting in your home
- Hang light-weight curtains or shades to reduce glare
- Wear shoes inside and outside the house Avoid going barefoot or wearing slippers
- Eat a well-balanced diet and exercise regularly