

**Brain Injuries and Older Adults:
Special Considerations**

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Statistics

- Special considerations
 - Medications
 - Preventing additional injury
 - General safety considerations
 - Resources



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Falls

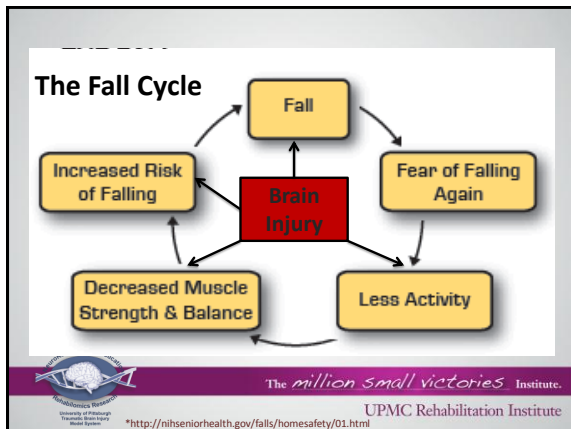
- 20-30% results in moderate to severe injuries
- Risk of falling and fall-related problems increases with age
- Fear of falling may impede therapy





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*<http://nihseniorhealth.gov/falls/aboutfalls/01.html>



- ### Top Causes of Falls
- Weakness
 - Poor balance
 - Disrupted gait
 - Foot pain or numbness
 - Impaired Vision
 - Cognitive Impairments
 - Dehydration
 - Home Hazards
 - Medication side effects
 - Dizziness
 - Confusion
 - Chronic Conditions
 - Blood pressure
 - History of stroke, TBI, other neurological conditions
 - Osteoporosis or Arthritis
 - Urinary incontinence
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[*http://nhseniorhealth.gov/falls/aboutfalls/01.html](http://nhseniorhealth.gov/falls/aboutfalls/01.html)

Preventing Falls

- Improve balance and strength through exercise (from therapists)
- Remove bifocal/multifocal glasses
- Wear proper footwear
- Use assistive devices
 - Canes and walkers
 - Reachers
 - Portable phones
 - Shower/toilet chairs

Make a Falls Prevention Plan!

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Preventing Falls: Walking

- Plan a walking program (20-30 minutes daily)
- Progress gradually
- Get a walking buddy
- Use assistive devices
- Wear the right shoes
- Select a good route with places to rest
- Choose a good pace



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Preventing Falls in the Home

- Modify environment
 - Remove or secure loose rugs
 - Add handrails and grab bars
 - Have multiple assistive devices available around the home
 - Adequate lighting
 - Clean up spills
 - Remove obstructions
 - Proper flooring (flat, secure, non-skid)
 - Rearrange furniture to provide room
 - Create space in the home to sit and take rest breaks (on stairs or long hallways)

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[*http://nihseniorhealth.gov/falls/homesafety/01.html](http://nihseniorhealth.gov/falls/homesafety/01.html)


Considerations in Older Adults

- Individuals over 65 years frequently experience brain injuries
- The leading cause of injuries (fractures, brain trauma) among older adults is falls
- More than 1 in 3 adults over 65 years old fall each year

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Other Safety Considerations


- Keep emergency numbers close by
 - Have contact numbers in a good place to use them quickly:
 - Store numbers in your phone
 - Place numbers on refrigerator at home
 - Carry numbers with you in purse or wallet
- Consider a life alert or other emergency device
 - Consider a Medical Alert bracelet
- Protect against fire or related dangers



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[*http://nibseneiorhealth.gov/falls/homesafety/01.html](http://nibseneiorhealth.gov/falls/homesafety/01.html)

Other Safety Considerations



- Avoid bathroom hazards
- Prevent poisoning
 - Keep all medications, vitamins, and supplements in a safe place.
 - Keep all cleaners out of reach and in locked cabinets.
- Supervision helps promote safe behaviors and prevents falls



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Medical Emergency


- If you have a medical emergency call 911 or go to the closest Emergency Room.
- Contact your PCP, PM&R Physician, Specialists, Pharmacist with questions.

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Medication Management after Acquired Brain Injury (ABI)






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Disclaimer

- This information is not meant to replace the advice from a medical or legal professional. You should consult your health care provider or attorney regarding specific medical, legal, or financial concerns.





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While in Inpatient Rehab

- Nurse as resource for learning about medications
- How are they taking their medications?
 - Examples: By mouth, by tube in nose or in stomach








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On Discharge



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Medications on Discharge


- It may be overwhelming at first to understand why you or your loved one is/are on new medications.
- A brain injury often affects an individual's entire body. Overtime, the body can change and adapt and may not require as many medications.



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Medication Review


- Medication review
 - Nursing
 - Time to ask questions
- Share a list of all of the medications they used to take (if applicable), including vitamins/supplements




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Medication List

- Updated medication list should be with your loved one or you at all times.
 - List should include:
 - Supplements/Vitamins
 - How much they take
 - When they take it
 - Any allergies to medications
- Sample Medication List Demo





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Support and Education

- Resources available on TBI
 - UPMC TBIMS
<http://www.rehabilomics.pitt.edu/index.htm>
 - MSKTC
<http://www.msktc.org/tbi>






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Resources for Older Adults

- Benedum Geriatric Center (UPMC): 412-692-4200
- UPMC Aging Institute:
<http://www.upmc.com/Services/AgingInstitute/resources-for-caregivers>
- Pepper Center
- PA Department of Aging:
http://www.aging.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/department_of_aging_home/18206



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Follow-Up

- Appointments
 - PCP
 - Can help coordinate care with other physicians
 - PM&R Physician
 - Medication management
 - Symptom management
 - Caregiver concerns
- Specialists/Therapists
 - Outpatient tests or additional procedures after they go home.
 - Ask Questions and Review Concerns.



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Advocate

- Advocate for your loved one
- Help your loved one by educating yourself about acquired brain injury (ABI)



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