



## Best Practice: Fall Prevention

# Home Health Aide Track



This material was prepared by Quality Insights of Pennsylvania, the Medicare Quality Improvement Organization Support Center for Home Health, under contract with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The contents presented do not necessarily reflect CMS policy. Publication number: 8SOW-PA-HHQ07.465. App. 10/07.



## Home Health Aide Track

This best practice intervention package is designed to educate and support home health aides in the priorities necessary for a home health fall prevention program that will support reducing avoidable acute care hospitalizations.

### Objectives

After completing the activities included in the Home Health Aide Track of this **Best Practice Intervention Package – Fall Prevention**, the learner will be able to:

1. Describe a fall prevention program.
2. Describe how fall prevention will support reducing avoidable acute care hospitalizations.
3. Describe two home health aide actions that will ensure optimal fall prevention for staff, patients, and caregivers.

Complete the following activities:

	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Estimated Time</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Read the Home Health Aide Guide to Fall Prevention	<a href="#">Page 75</a>	10 minutes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Review the fall prevention patient scenarios and answer the questions	<a href="#">Page 76</a>	20 minutes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Listen to podcast (audio recording) and use the discussion questions for group interaction	<a href="#">Page 77</a>	20 minutes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Complete the home health aide post-test and give to your clinical manager	<a href="#">Page 78</a>	10 minutes
	<b>Total Time</b>		60 minutes

# Home Health Aide Guide to Fall Prevention



## Definitions:



- **Fall** - “An unintentional change in position resulting in coming to rest on the ground or at a lower level” (Missouri Alliance for Home Care).
- **Fall Prevention** – Identify patients at risk of falling and planning interventions to assist prevention of falling in an effort to reduce hospitalizations.

## Importance:



- **More than one third** of adults 65 and older fall each year in the United States [CDC].
- Falls, even without injury, often cause a person to develop a fear of falling, which, in turn, limits their activity [CDC].
- In 2003, there were more than **309,500** hospital admissions for hip fractures [NCHS 2006].

### How home health aides can support a successful fall prevention program:

1. Observe for and notify manager of possible risk factors for falls
2. Report witnessed, un-witnessed, and near-falls to clinicians and managers
3. Report home safety hazards such as poor lighting and throw rugs
4. Encourage patient and caregiver to use walkers or canes, if patient has a device
5. Use and encourage family to use gait belts when patient’s gait (walking) is unsteady (Gait belts provides a secure and safe hand hold for caregivers and staff when transferring or walking patients)
6. Ensure proper use of adaptive equipment in bathrooms
7. Remind patients to wear glasses and hearing aids
8. Remind patients to exercise regularly, as ordered
9. Attend agency fall prevention education sessions



### Some fall risk factors...

- Age (>65 years old)
- Mental impairments (e.g. dementia)
- Female gender
- Past history of a fall
- Weakness in the feet or legs
- Walking problems
- Foot disorders
- Problems with hearing or vision
- Balance problems
- Low vitamin D levels
- Medications (especially drugs used for psychiatric or mood problems)
- Arthritis
- Parkinson’s disease

Adapted from  
<http://www.healthinaging.org/agingintheknow>



The **key to a successful fall prevention program** is moving beyond responding to witnessed or non-witnessed falls to **focus on fall prevention**. Prevention not only incorporates an assessment of risk for falls, but it also promotes a **proactive approach to fall prevention** rather than reacting to individual falls.

## Home Health Aide Scenarios for Fall Prevention

**Mrs. S lives alone and has been on home health services for one week.** You are visiting twice a week to assist her with her bath. The other disciplines in the home are skilled nursing (SN) and physical therapy (PT). You know SN and PT have spoken with the patient about installing grab bars in the bathroom. Mrs. S does not use her walker all the time during your visit. Mrs. S's walking is unsteady, and she grabs hold of the toilet and sink in the bathroom to steady herself.

Use the examples from “**How Home Health Aides can Support a Successful Fall Prevention Program**” on the previous page and/or consider other approaches to list ways the home health aide can promote fall prevention with Mrs. S.



- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

**Mr. M was just admitted to home care following a total knee replacement.** He is using a walker and following an exercise program as instructed by PT. Mr. M is primary caregiver for his wife who has dementia (memory loss, confusion...). Home health aides are ordered to help Mr. M shower twice a week until he regains strength and has improved balance. PT and HHA are the only services in the home. Mr. M tells you when you are assisting him with his bath that when he awakened during the night he had trouble finding his walker. Apparently his wife had moved it. He asked you not to say anything because it might get both of them in trouble.

Use the examples from “**How Home Health Aides can Support a Successful Fall Prevention Program**” on the previous page and/or consider other approaches to list ways the home health aide can promote fall prevention with Mr. M.



- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.



## Fall Prevention Multi-Media Activities Podcast\*(Audio Recordings)

### Fall Prevention Podcast (Audio Recording) Instructions:

Listen to the podcast (audio recording) to learn more about reducing avoidable acute care hospitalizations with fall prevention.

### Fall Prevention Audio Recording

- 10 minute podcast (audio recording) related to fall prevention
- Podcast (audio recordings) link is located at [http://www.homehealthquality.org/hh/hha/interventionpackages/falls\\_prevention.aspx](http://www.homehealthquality.org/hh/hha/interventionpackages/falls_prevention.aspx)

There are several ways to listen to the podcast (audio recording):

- Visit the link above and listen directly through the Web site
- Download the podcast (audio recording) by right clicking on the audio file and selecting “Save Target As ...” This will save the file to your hard drive. Once you have saved the file, you can listen to it on your computer or can burn the audio file to a CD or download to a MP3 player

\*A podcast is a digital media file, often an audio recording, placed on the Internet and made available to the listener on their home computer or personal digital recording device for convenience. There is no change from previous references to “audio recordings” except the name. You may continue to download and listen to recordings as you have in previous months.

## Discussion Questions

You may complete these discussion questions together in a group setting (monthly team meeting) or just think about them if you are doing this as a self-study.

- Discuss the importance of fall prevention
- Discuss the impact and importance of the HHA’s role in preventing patient falls
- Can you identify other risk factors we should discuss?
- Is each patient’s risk score and risk factors on your Care Plan? If not, do you know the patient’s score and risk factors? If not, ask agency managers to add the patient fall risk factors to your Care Plan so that you can also be informed of the patient’s risks for falling and be an important contributor to improved patient outcomes. Share your patient risk concerns with your clinicians so that patient falls can be prevented.



## Home Health Aide Post-Test Fall Prevention

Clinician name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Choose the ONE BEST response to the following questions. Circle the answer that identifies the ONE BEST response.

1. Fall prevention is more than just identifying patients who are at risk of falling. Patient-specific interventions are used to assist with decreasing the risk of falling and preventing injury.
  - A. True
  - B. False
2. Falls can affect the following:
  - A. The rate of acute care hospitalization occurrences
  - B. Patient injury rate and severity
  - C. Patients' fear of falling
  - D. All of the above
3. Some risk factors for falls include the following **except**:
  - A. Age
  - B. Confusion
  - C. Walking problems
  - D. Past history of falls
  - E. Not having flu shot
  - F. Balance problems
4. Home health aides have a very important role with fall prevention. Home health aides can observe patients closely for fall risk factors and report any falls or **near** falls the patient or caregiver may have mentioned during the visit.
  - A. True
  - B. False
5. Home health aides can encourage the patient and families to do all of the following to help prevent falls:
  - A. Report falls or near falls
  - B. Use walkers or canes at all times (if prescribed)
  - C. Remind patients to follow their exercise program as ordered by nurse, therapist or physician
  - D. Read patient and family fall prevention education material, if provided by the agency
  - E. All of the above

**Answers to Post-Test are located in the Leadership Section, page 35.**