

# IDENTIFYING FALL RISK FACTORS

## Did you know?

- Approximately 8 hospital admissions occur each day in New Brunswick due to fall-related injuries in older adults.
- Women are two times more likely to be admitted to hospital due to fall.
- The average length of stay in hospital due to a fall is 23 days.

As a primary healthcare provider, you are already aware that falls are a serious threat to the health and well-being of older adults.

The more risk factors a person has, the greater their chances of falling. Healthcare providers can help lower an older adult's risk of injury by addressing the fall risk factors that have been identified during the medical examination.

## Risk factors known to be associated with falls include:

### Biological

- Impaired mobility
- Balance deficit
- Gait deficit
- Muscle weakness
- Advanced age
- Chronic illness / disability:
  - Cognitive impairment
  - Stroke
  - Parkinson's disease
  - Diabetes
  - Arthritis
  - Heart disease
  - Incontinence
  - Foot disorders
- Visual impairment
- Acute illness

### Behavioral

- History of falls
- Fear of falling
- Multiple medications
- Use of:
  - Anti psychotics
  - Sedative/hypnotics
  - Antidepressants
- Excessive alcohol
- Risk-taking behaviours
- Lack of exercise
- Inappropriate footwear/clothing
- Inappropriate assistive devices use
- Poor nutrition or hydration
- Lack of sleep

### Social & Economic

- Low income
- Lower level of education
- Illiteracy / language barriers
- Poor living conditions
- Living alone
- Lack of support networks
- Lack of social interactions
- Lack of transportation

### Environmental

- Poor building design and/or maintenance
- Inadequate building codes
- Stairs
- Home hazards
- Lack of:
  - Handrails
  - Curb ramps
  - Rest areas
  - Grab bars
- Poor lighting or sharp contrasts
- Slippery or uneven surfaces
- Obstacles and other tripping hazards

Table adapted from: Scott V., Dukeshire S., Gallagher E., Scanian A. (2001). A Best Practice Guide for Prevention of Falls Among Seniors Living in the Community.

We encourage you to adopt a coordinated approach to implementing best clinical practice guidelines for fall prevention. The **Algorithm for Fall Risk Screening, Assessment and Intervention** located on the other side of this page, outlines the recommended process to address fall risk factors of concern with an older patient. This tool will be updated on an ongoing basis as new research, best practice and resources are available.

Keep in mind that your clinical judgement should also take into account the older adults ability or readiness to address their risk factors, their preferences and the availability of family support during the development of an individualized care plan.

# ALGORITHM FOR FALL RISK SCREENING AND INTERVENTION

