

PD & Fall Prevention

People with Parkinson disease (PWP) have an increased risk of falling due to the symptoms of PD – freezing, stiffness, shuffling gait, etc. Experiencing a fall (or frequent falls) can affect a PWP both physically and psychologically. Keep in mind the following suggestions to help reduce the risk of falling.

At Home

- Do not try to do two things at once (e.g. walk and talk, walk and carry laundry).
- Never carry objects with both hands; this can throw you off balance. If you do fall and you have something in both hands, you will have trouble using your arms to help break your fall.
- Make clear, uncluttered paths for walking in the house.
- Arrange furniture so that it is easy to get around.
- Move plants, foot stools, coffee tables and magazine racks out of the way.
- Clear the floor of throw rugs, electrical cords and anything else that you could trip over.
- Bare floors are the easiest surfaces to walk on. If you must have carpet in your house, try to have low pile carpet. Watch for small pets or other objects on the ground.
- Keep sidewalks and stairs clear of clutter.
- Install handrails on all stairways and consider installing handrails along hallways.
- Stand with your feet wide apart when doing tasks that challenge your balance.
- If you have balance problems, sit to accomplish tasks such as getting dressed, tying shoes and brushing teeth.
- Place small cushions on low chairs to make it easier to get up.
- Arrange the kitchen to minimize your bending and reaching.
- Avoid using step ladders and stools to reach high objects. Ask for help!
- Use a cordless phone to avoid the “mad dash” to answer it.
- Use an answering machine for times when getting to the phone is a problem.
- Make sure there is adequate lighting at night.

In the Bathroom

- Install grab bars by the toilet and in the bath/shower. **DO NOT use a towel rack as a grab bar - it can't support you!**
- Consider using a raised toilet seat; as it makes it easier to get on and off the toilet.
- If the bathroom is far from your bedroom, consider a commode or urinal for night-time toileting needs.
- Use non-slip mats in the bathtub and shower.
- Consider using a shower/bath chair.
- Use “soap-on-a-rope” or install a liquid soap dispenser on the wall of the bath/shower. This way you won't have to bend down to pick up soap if you drop it.

Outside and in the Community

To keep your balance, pay extra attention in the following situations:

- uneven or sloping ground
- unpredictable surfaces such as grass, sand, pebbles
- stairs without handrails
- uneven sidewalks
- wet leaves, ice and/or snow on sidewalks
- stepping onto or off a curb
- pedestrian crossings on busy streets
- public transportation
- crowded malls
- around children and animals

Remember to speak to your neurologist if you are experiencing more frequent falls as your medication schedule may need to be adjusted.

Did You Know...

Many of our Parkinson Association of Alberta Offices offer Fall Prevention education sessions, please visit our website (www.parkinsonalberta.ca) or call your regional PA Office to see if there is a session near you!