

## **Orthopaedic Connection**

### **My Course in Prevention of Falls**

By Thomas J. Haverbush, M.D.  
Orthopaedic Surgeon

#### ***Transforming patient information into patient understanding.***

One of the saddest aspects of my work is to see so many people who are injured in falling. It is a very large topic, which I think will require more than one article. If I try to cover too much in the space allowed it will be too superficial and not very informative.

Falls are a huge public health problem. In a split second life changes forever. Falls are one of the most serious problems I deal with and in many cases are preventable.

As an Orthopaedic Surgeon I am capable of fixing anything you break. Helping you prevent a fracture - injury is an important role I can play too.

#### **The Problem**

Preventing falls in older persons and for anyone with osteoporosis is immensely important. Persons with osteoporosis who fall typically break their hip, spine or wrist. Nine out of ten hip fractures are caused by a fall. Besides the surgery you have to endure, it can be the end of your active, independent life. For persons 65 and older, fall related injuries are a leading cause of death.

- Each year one out of three people over 65 experience a fall
- Three out of four falls occur indoors

#### **The Good News**

- Falls can mostly be prevented
- We must give attention to safety indoors and out
- Be aware (patient and family) of physical changes with age
- Appropriate lifestyle changes are needed

#### **Outdoor Safety**

- Wear low-heeled shoes with rubber soles for added traction
- Athletic shoes are best
- Always use hand rails on steps

- If a sidewalk is slippery, better to walk on the grass if able
- Floor surfaces in a public building can be slippery if wet. Be aware.
- Walk on a carpet runner
- Keep your porch, deck and drive free of snow, leaves and debris
- Turn on the porch light before going out after dark
- Use a walker or cane as needed. Don't be proud.
- Stop at the curb to check height before you step up or down

**Key Point:** If people would do what I just covered above - outside falls would decrease greatly.

### **Indoor Safety Tips**

- Keep your floor clear of clutter
- Floor surfaces need to be smooth, but not slippery
- Wear supportive low heeled shoes in the house. Athletic shoes are best.
- Don't walk around in socks or scuffs
- No loose rugs or loose carpet, please
- Handrails on stairways
- Keep stairs well lighted
- Get electrical cords and telephone lines out of walking areas
- Grab bars are needed in the bathroom and shower
- Rubber bath mat in shower or tub
- Night light in your bedroom and hall
- Be able to turn a light switch on as you enter a room
- Avoid step stools and ladders. Let someone else help you.
- Don't sit on chairs that have wheels
- Older persons can't tolerate cold. Low room temperatures can cause body temperature to drop leading to dizziness and falling
- Get up slowly after eating, sleeping or resting

I can tell you I have seen countless injured older patients who did not do one or more of the things just mentioned.

***Older persons and their family must pay attention and do these things to be safe. Please try to do the things mentioned.***

Don't throw this away. We have at least another week to go on our Fall Prevention Course.

See you next week everybody.

**Merry Christmas and Happy New Year** to all of our Gratiot County Herald Orthopaedic Connection readers.

I hope you have learned a lot this year. It is my privilege to take care of many of you in the office and a privilege to write these articles

to help readers and their families be more knowledgeable about their health.

For more information about falls and injuries and all the things I treat in the office and hospital check out our teaching website [www.orthopodsurgeon.com](http://www.orthopodsurgeon.com) and your Orthopaedic Connection.

Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free functional lives.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush