

# The Continued Course in Fall Prevention

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## *Transforming patient information into patient understanding.*

Preventing falls is as important as anything we can do as health professionals.

The scope of the problem is huge. Falls are the leading cause of older persons dying from injury. The number of falls and severity of injury, which results from the fall increases with age.

In a split second - life changes, often forever. One day you are O.K. The next your whole life is turned upside down. 25% of patients who have a hip fracture die within a year. 50% never return to the level of function they had before. Only 25% recover. That is very discouraging. Get the picture of why I am writing about it?

Falls have to be prevented. Period.

- **Physical Change**

Falls happen due to decreased reflexes, balance problems, hearing impairment, vision change, existing illnesses and not the least, medications.

- **Reflexes and Muscle Strength**

As you age reaction time slows and regaining balance following sudden movement is difficult. Falls can easily result. Keep active. It maintains muscle tone and flexibility. Regular walking helps a lot. Weight training can keep up strength in your arms and legs and improve how you move. Exercise can be prescribed for you and the Lakeview Community Wellness Center is a great place to do it.

- **Balance**

Improved balance helps prevent falls. Balance can be improved in classes to improve balance and coordination. Weak muscles increase the risk of falling. Same advice as in the paragraph above. Muscle strengthening and balance exercises are available to you at LCWC.

- **Hearing**

Hearing loss can lead to falls when you do not clearly hear sounds around you that tell us we are in danger. If you are sure you have hearing loss, wearing a hearing aid can be a great benefit.

- **Vision**

Adequate vision is key to avoiding falls. You must have reasonable vision to avoid things in your path, judge steepness of chairs and curbs. Get periodic eye exams and wear glasses.

- **Illness and Medication**

This is a very large subject, too large to totally cover here. Illnesses that affect circulation, sensation and mobility can lead to falls. Medications can cause confusion, dizziness and slowed reflexes that affect your coordination and balance.

- **Behavior Factors to prevent falls**

Avoid alcohol  
Slow down. Haste causes falls.  
Stay focused in public places  
Exercise  
Good nutrition  
Use a cane  
Wear glasses if needed  
Get a hearing aid if you need it  
Wear good shoes indoors and out

Well, there you have it. Pay attention to all of these factors and you won't be seeing me to fix your fracture! Good luck.

I am happy to see all Orthopaedic problems at the Lakeview Community Wellness Center in Lakeview or at the office in Alma at 315 Warwick Dr., Alma, Michigan.

Please call 989-463-6092 for information or to schedule an appointment.

Future Lakeview Community Wellness Center Clinic dates are December 18, 2009, January 8, and January 15, 2010.

[www.orthopodsurgeon.com](http://www.orthopodsurgeon.com) our office teaching website has a ton of good information about all the Orthopaedic conditions I treat. Check it out.

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

