



Universal Falls Risk Factors

1. Biological Risks

- **Vision/Hearing:** Unmanaged vision and hearing loss may result in poor balance, lower levels of physical activity, poor diet, social isolation, depression, poor awareness and/or orientation.
- **Cognitive Ability:** Clients with impaired cognition experience high risk for falls as their ability to understand and manage falls risks is lessened due to changes in awareness and concentration.
- **Medication Effects:** The type, dose, number of medications a client takes may place client at higher risk for falls.
- **Vitamin D Levels :** Clients within the Northern Health Region may have Vitamin D inadequacy or deficiency due to living in a northern latitude, dietary limitations, and/or reduced skin absorption and production of vitamin D. In older adults, limited sun exposure, decreased skin pigmentation, chronic disease conditions, medication effects, and lifestyle factors contribute to Vitamin D deficiency. There is an association between Vitamin D deficiency and muscle weakness which could result in balance problems or an inability to recover from a postural perturbation (e.g., sway). Vitamin D assists with the body's ability to absorb calcium and improves muscle function; thereby, decreasing the risk of falling.
- **Balance/Gait:** Balance deficits threaten the integration of accurate sensory information, such as vision and proprioception, with a well-functioning musculoskeletal system to allow for safe movement. Increasing age, inactivity, and muscle weakness can contribute to balance/gait deficits.
- **Contience:** Clients will make extraordinary efforts to avoid an incontinent episode to maintain their dignity. The need for assisted toileting and symptoms of overactive bladder contribute to this risk factor.
- **Foot Condition:** The presence of foot problems, such as pain, toe deformities, toe muscle weakness and reduced ankle flexibility, can alter the pressure distribution beneath the feet, impairing balance and functional ability.

2. Behavioral Risks

- **Misuse of Alcohol and Drugs (Prescription and Street):** Clients are at higher risk due to impaired cognition, awareness, and changes in decision making.
- **Nutrition/Hydration Levels:** Inadequate nutrition and hydration can cause hypotension, dizziness, weakness, fatigue, confusion, and social isolation, which can increase the risk of falls.
- **Appropriate Footwear/Clothing:** Inappropriate footwear and clothing can impact balance and the ability to mobilize safely without slips and trips.
- **Amount of Exercise:** Clients who do not exercise miss the many benefits that exercise provides. Exercise can improve physical fitness, strength, energy levels, stamina, and mental health. In children and teens, frequent and vigorous exercise helps to increase bone strength. In older adults, certain types of exercise help to prevent bone loss.

3. Socioeconomic Risks

- **Social Isolation:** Social isolation may result in lower levels of physical activity, decreased energy, symptoms of depression, and poor diet.

4. Environmental Risks

- **Building Design or Maintenance:** Current building/site design may not support the functional needs of all clients.
- **Safety Hazards:** Obstacles, clutter, furniture, and inappropriate mobility aids can impair the client's ability to mobilize safely.