

FALLS AND INCONTINENCE

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In Australia, around one-third of older people living in the community experience at least one fall per year. Studies have shown that there is a link between falls and incontinence and that the risk of falls increases with the type and severity of the incontinence. There are steps that you can take to decrease the risk of falls related to incontinence.

In 2009-10 it was estimated that 83,000 people over the age of 65 years were hospitalised due to falls. The risk factors identified for falls were age, sex, medication use and predisposing medical conditions such as Parkinson's disease, stroke, incontinence and vision problems (AIHW 2013).

In a study by Foley et al. (2012) they examined the association between urinary incontinence and falls in people over the age of 70 years. They concluded that the larger the volume of urine leakage a person was experiencing, the greater the risk of falling. Another study by Chiarelli, Mackenzie, and Osmotherly (2009) found that "falls are significantly associated with the symptoms of overactive bladder such as urgency and nocturia but not with stress incontinence.

Incontinence is not part of ageing. There are many different types of faecal and urinary incontinence. If you are suffering with incontinence it is important to seek help from a qualified health professional to establish the correct continence management program for you. A continence management program should prevent or minimise complications and be compatible with a person's lifestyle choices.

For the elderly living with incontinence that have an established continence management program it is important to consider the following to reduce the risk of falls associated with incontinence.

- Ensure adequate hydration as over or under drinking can have consequences. Your health care professional will help you identify the correct fluid intake for you
- Ensure that the home environment is free from slip and trip hazards
- Ensure the path to the toilet is well lit
- Consider the use of equipment such as urinals or commode chairs that can be easily located close to the bed
- Consider the use of clothing that is easier to use

If you are experiencing incontinence or your continence management program and or equipment used is not meeting your needs, speak to your health professional.

References

AIHW: Bradley C 2013. Hospitalisations due to falls by older people, Australia 2009–10. Injury research and statistics series no. 70. Cat. no. INJCAT 146. Canberra: AIHW.

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