

DON'T FALL FOR IT: *Tips for Trips*



A Functional Pathways White Paper



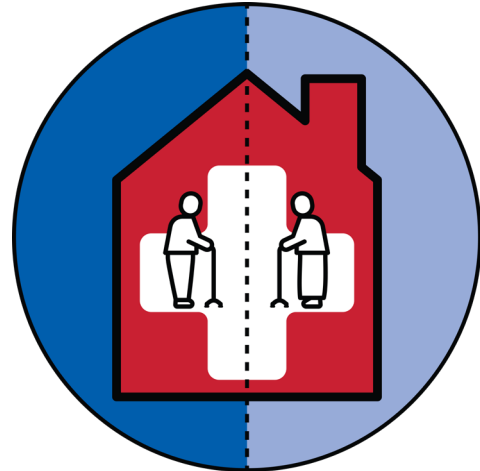
**Functional
Pathways**

30 Years of Excellence

Reducing and Managing Falls

Why is it important to prevent falls with residents and effectively intervene when falls happen in senior living communities? Falls can greatly reduce overall quality of life by causing serious injuries, leading to a decrease in ability to function, and restriction of activities due to injuries or fear of future falls. There's also an associated cost—to the home, providers, and the residents themselves.

This white paper lays out the importance of an effective, interdisciplinary falls management program for residents and staffs as well as outlining how to establish such a program at your facility.



Half of nursing home residents fall annually

Adverse Effects of Falls

The issues that can stem from a fall, or multiple falls, are multi-faceted. Consequences can include, but are not limited to:

- Serious injuries
- Reduced quality of life
- Increased fear of future falls
- Restriction of activities
- Decreased ability to function
- Increased risk of death

What causes a resident to fall? The challenge is that it's multifactorial. There are intrinsic factors, such as the effects aging plays on gait, balance, and strength; acute medical conditions; chronic diseases; behavioral symptoms; and medication side effects. There are also extrinsic causes, like environmental hazards, using unsafe equipment, poor living environment (dim lighting, bathroom too small, etc.), and lack of access to personal care items.

Falls are the second-leading cause of brain and spinal cord injuries



The Importance of a Fall Management Program

So, what can be done to prevent residents from falling? It's imperative to be proactive rather than reactive, and that starts with an effective fall prevention and management program.

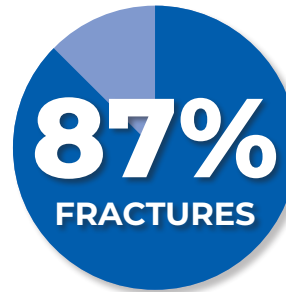
A comprehensive falls program includes taking steps to prevent falls and effective treatment plans to help a resident if they do suffer a fall.

Preventive measures include:

- Preventative assessment/screening
- Interventions for risk areas with individualized care planning
- Implementing preventative measures
- Ongoing monitoring

After a resident suffers a fall, treatment should include:

- Root cause analysis
- Intervention and implementation
- Ongoing monitoring



*Falls are responsible for
~ 87% of fractures in
older adults treated in
emergency rooms*

A Culture of Safety

A factor that may go overlooked when compiling a falls program is the culture of your community. From the top down, implementing a “culture of safety” reinforces best practices and helps teams stay on the same page when it comes to procedures. A true culture of safety starts with strong leadership with clearly defined policies, enforcement of those policies, and open communication. Through that, therapy teams are empowered to accept responsibility, identify and report safety concerns, and correct issues. Additionally, they will know how to accurately complete fall incident reports, interpret monthly fall analysis reports, log and monitor data, and analyze whether preventive measures in place are working effectively.

Building and maintaining that culture is important in many respects, not just for implementing a falls program. Culture, organizational commitment, and team skills all play an important role for a community

as a whole, and especially when it comes to maintaining a strong falls program. This includes things like putting together a “falls team” that includes the interdisciplinary team, nursing assistants, and a team lead. Holding weekly meetings with that team helps with effective team problem-solving, open communication, keeping everyone updated on policies and procedures, and developing interventions for recurrent fallers.

It's also important to plan regular inspections of environmental and equipment safety in your community. This ensures issues such as poor or insufficient lighting, clutter, unstable furniture, unsafe flooring, and unsafe footwear are addressed. Through a culture of safety, not only will regular inspections take place, but staff will be trained to observe environment and equipment effectively and how to report issues.

Falls Assessment - It Takes a Team

Assessing falls requires both a multifactorial and interdisciplinary approach. Along with your nursing team, falls assessment requires input and help from physicians, pharmacists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, activities teams, all caregivers, and the housekeeping and maintenance teams.

Each team member is responsible for various screenings, assessments, and treatments to prevent falls or provide interventions after falls. Therapy screenings, therapy evaluations, fall screenings, and fall risk assessments are all part of an interdisciplinary approach.

Some of the factors to consider when screening and assessing residents for falls include:

- History of falls
- Any change in cognitive status
- Whether they are living with dementia, and what stage if so
- Any change in behavior that may indicate an increased need for assistance
- Vision status
- Continence
- Current mobility status and any changes in mobility
- Any balance issues
- Systolic blood pressure and vitals
- Age
- Health conditions, such as cardiovascular, cognitive, vestibular or dietary issues
- Sleep concerns
- Medications



Root Cause Analysis – The 5 Whys

To effectively intervene when a resident falls, the root cause of the fall must be identified. This often requires going beyond the surface level analysis and establishing a chain of reasoning to understand why a resident fell and what other factors need to be addressed beyond the one instance of falling.

Example:

The Incident: A resident fell.

Why? They were wearing socks that were NOT non-slip.

Why? They didn't have any non-slip socks available in their drawers.

Why? The facility didn't have any in stock to replace, nor were there any available in the laundry.

Why? The resident was changing socks more often.

Why? There has been an increase in admissions to the facility AND an increase in episodes of incontinence, leading to socks getting wet.

Interventions:

1. Order more non-slip socks to keep in stock.
2. Keep more socks in the resident's room.
3. Assess and intervene on increased incontinence episodes.

Because falls are multifactorial, interventions should be, too. All interventions should be based on findings in the falls assessment and individualized based on each resident's risk of falling. The goal is to minimize the risk of falls and injury from falls while also maximizing the resident's remaining abilities. This process should be continuously reevaluated to ensure the best treatments are being provided and outcomes are improving or reaching desired levels.

Some universal interventions that should be in place for ALL residents include:

- Adequate lighting
- Surfaces and environmental modifications
- Screening and assessment for wheelchair seating
- Restorative nursing/wellness (as appropriate)
- Auto wheelchair locks
- Hip protectors
- Patient-specific bed, chair, and toilet height



Summary

Falls can greatly reduce the quality of life for residents and can even cause serious injury or death. It's imperative that senior living communities have a comprehensive falls management program in place to not only reduce the likelihood of falls among residents, but also to most effectively aid them in recovery after a fall. This can be achieved by implementing a culture of safety, ensuring an interdisciplinary approach with your teams, and using root cause analyses.

Functional Pathways' top priority is to provide high-quality, outcome-based therapy to our partners to ensure the health and wellness of their residents. We offer a robust set of clinical programs, known as our CORE4+, to improve all aspects of health and wellness. Through our ***Be Steady Fall Prevention Program***, ***our communities have realized an 80% reduction in falls with major injury and a 63% improvement in ambulation.***



Celebrating 30 years of service, Functional Pathways is a therapist-founded, -owned, and -led company continually reinventing the therapy market. Spanning the full continuum of care, the company provides its hospital rehab and contract therapy clients with enhanced operational efficiencies, improved patient outcomes, and optimized revenue streams that position them as a leader in their market. Through its 2,500+ therapists caring for close to 7,000 patients a day, Functional Pathways continues to make a difference in every life they touch.