Quick Guide: My Parent Had an Accident. What Should I Do?

Print this page and keep it handy for anyone who may help provide care for your parent. Post it in a highly visible space, along with any information about medications and their physician's contact information.

Immediately after a fall

1. Ask your parent to stay still

Do not attempt to stand immediately after a fall. Examine for any head, neck or back injuries. Call 911 in case of unconsciousness or major injuries.

2. Help them get up slowly only if injuries appear minor

If there isn't a chair nearby, carefully assist your parent to a sitting position on the floor. If a chair is nearby, move the chair closer to your parent, instruct them to get on their hands and knees, carefully help them stand up then sit down in the chair. If pain is detected, go to hospital or immediate care. In cases of broken bones, severe swelling or pain, call 911.

3. Document reason for fall

Falls happen for various reasons. Ask your parent the following questions: Have they eaten today? How much water have they had to drink? Have they taken their medication as prescribed? Did they trip over something? Did they feel dizzy or weak before falling? If you have any questions or concerns afterward, contact emergency services.

Accident date	Injury and location on body	Cause

Frequent accident medical assessment

If your parent frequently falls, ask their primary care doctor or attending physician to assess and address any medical concerns that may affect the likelihood of reoccurring accidents. Use this document to help guide the conversation. Keep in mind – this list is not exhaustive and there may be other factors you or their physician may want to explore.

Medical concern	Examination/test date	Results/notes
Balance and gait A balance and gait assessment is an easy way to help detect neurological conditions that may be affecting the nervous system or accelerating loss of muscle mass.		
Blood pressure Ask for it to be read while sitting and then standing. This is especially important if your parent felt light-headed or weak prior to their fall.		
Blood tests These can be helpful for identifying new underlying causes that could be contributing to falls, like anemia or a number of infections. Ask for a copy of the lab results and have the doctor explain any abnormalities to you.		
Cardiovascular		

Chronic heart conditions like atrial fibrillation can cause the heart to race, which contributes to weakness and dizziness.

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Dehydration Low levels of hydration can lead to memory problems, slower reaction times and fatigue. Dehydration is easy to detect and treat. Ask the healthcare provider how much water your parent should consume each day.		

Medication review

Many prescribed medications can heighten fall risks. Bring a comprehensive list of medications to the appointment. Some medications may need an adjustment.

Neurological

Conditions, like Parkinson's, dementia, stroke and multiple sclerosis are often characterized by motor dysfunction and imbalance, heightening fall risks.

Vision and inner ear issues

Poor vision can contribute to falls caused by tripping over objects or miscalculating distances. The inner ear houses the vestibular system, which regulates balance.

