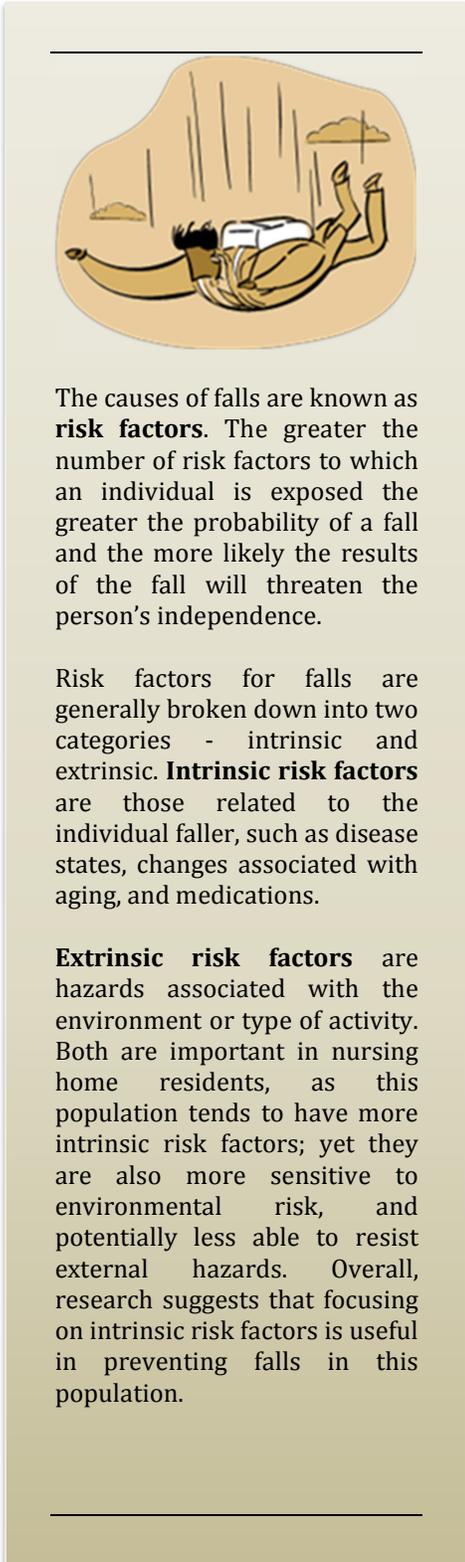


Falls Prevention: A Study of Risk Factors

Transferring Knowledge to Practice

Knowledge:	Do you know?
Skill:	Can you do it?
Behavior:	Are there issues?



The causes of falls are known as **risk factors**. The greater the number of risk factors to which an individual is exposed the greater the probability of a fall and the more likely the results of the fall will threaten the person's independence.

Risk factors for falls are generally broken down into two categories - intrinsic and extrinsic. **Intrinsic risk factors** are those related to the individual faller, such as disease states, changes associated with aging, and medications.

Extrinsic risk factors are hazards associated with the environment or type of activity. Both are important in nursing home residents, as this population tends to have more intrinsic risk factors; yet they are also more sensitive to environmental risk, and potentially less able to resist external hazards. Overall, research suggests that focusing on intrinsic risk factors is useful in preventing falls in this population.

Worksheet 2

Directions: Read the information under the picture on the left. Beside each of the risk factors below write "I" = Intrinsic or "E" = Extrinsic.

- Lack of safety railings in bathroom or hallway
- Generalized muscle weakness
- Lack of restorative program
- Clutter or poorly positioned storage areas
- Gait and balance disorders; difficulty rising from a chair or sitting back down
- instability on first standing; staggering on turning
- Neurological conditions and/or cognitive impairment
- Poorly fitting or incorrect eyewear
- Unfamiliar environment
- Inappropriate use of chemical or physical restraints
- Age over 80
- Arthritis
- Caregivers or staff not trained in fall prevention
- Depression
- Bed too high
- History of falls
- Impaired ADLs
- Use of an assistive device
- Visual deficit
- Lack of seating or positioning devices for sitting
- Hearing deficit
- Inadequate lighting
- Knee, hip or foot deformities or pain; joint instability; poor back flexibility
- Chronic pain, antalgic gait
- Cardiac dysrhythmias; syncope
- Delirium
- Ill-fitting or inappropriate footwear
- Lack of assistive devices
- Dizziness/lightheadedness
- Fear of falling
- Fluid and electrolyte imbalance
- Orthostatic hypotension
- Uneven flooring surfaces
- Malfunctioning call systems or alarms
- Peripheral neuropathy
- Urinary or fecal urgency or incontinence
- More than 3-4 medications
- Use of full-length side rails
- Wet or slippery floor
- Types of medications (psychoactive medications; some cardiac medications)
- Total number of chronic diseases or conditions
- Deconditioning or acute illness from any etiology
- Room too far from nurse's station