

September 2023

Moving Along

A newsletter of the Waverly Area
Parkinson's Disease Support Group

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Parkinson's Support Group

Saturday, September 9 | 10 a.m. to Noon | Tendrils Rooftop Garden

This month we will be watching a webinar from the American Parkinson's Disease Association, "Ask the Doctors Anything!", covering a wide range of topics from medication, deep brain stimulation, non-motor symptoms, exercise, freezing of gait, and more.

Park in the Red Lot and enter through the door marked "Tendrils" near the pharmacy drive-up window. This event is free and open to all. Call (319) 352-4961 with questions.

Exercise Program at The W – Delay the Disease

Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays | 10 to 10:50 a.m. | The W – Wartburg College
Exercise Program for People with PD. For more information or to sign up, call (319) 352-8311 or go to: the-w.org

APDA Iowa 2023 Optimism Walk

Saturday, September 30, 2023 | Principal Park | Des Moines, Iowa

Check-in and pre-event activities begin at 12 p.m., ceremony at 1 p.m. with walk to follow.

What is an Optimism Walk?

- It is a nationwide movement to mobilize and inspire people to step up and put an end to Parkinson's disease.
- An important and fun-filled event that raises much-needed funds and awareness for Parkinson's disease.
- It includes a short, non-competitive walk, with a day filled with camaraderie, family-friendly activities, music, refreshments, vendor tables and more!

For more information, visit the Iowa Optimism Walk page at:

<https://www.apdaparkinson.org/community/iowa/events-ia/iowaoptimismwalk2019/>

PARKINSON'S DISEASE STUDY LOOKING FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The University of Northern Iowa is conducting a research study on the cognitive-communication impacts of Parkinson's disease. They are looking for interested individuals with Parkinson's disease and their close others (i.e., spouse, caregiver, family member).

The research study will involve a 20-30 minute interview via Zoom. Participants will be entered in a drawing for 1 of 2 \$30 gift cards.

If interested, contact Sarah Diehl by e-mail at sarah.diehl@uni.edu or Taylor Park by e-mail at parkt@uni.edu

SEPTEMBER IS NATIONAL FALL PREVENTION MONTH

POSTURAL INSTABILITY (BALANCE AND FALLS)

Postural instability, or difficulty balancing, is possibly the most challenging of the major Parkinson's disease (PD) movement symptoms.

Shakiness, stiffness and slow movement can change how a person walks. The addition of postural instability increases the risk of falls. Encouragingly, exercise is proven to improve gait and balance and reduce falls.

The best approach is to start exercising early and do your best to maintain good posture.

In addition to exercise, early physical therapy can be beneficial. You don't need to wait until you are having trouble moving to start. A physical therapist can help you develop a general exercise plan and teach you specific exercises to maintain and improve balance and posture.

Home Safety Strategies

A safe home is vital to reducing fall risks. Here are some tips to ensure that your home is accessible:

- Remove throw rugs

- Keep areas well lit; use night lights where necessary
- Install grab bars in the bathroom
- Install handrails on all stairs
- Clear clutter
- Avoid rolling chairs

It is helpful to go room by room through your home to make any needed adjustments that will create a safer home environment.

For a complete safety review of your home, ask your doctor for an in-home occupational therapist safety assessment or find a certified aging-in-place specialist (CAPS). You can locate a CAPS on the website of the National Association of Home Builders or by calling 1-800-368-5242.

Tips for Preventing Falls

People with Parkinson's can fall in different directions. Walking or turning can sometimes result in forward falls. Backward falls can happen while turning, standing or even sitting.

Minimize Fall Risk

- Avoid stepping backward. Instead, step sideways. Make a safe turn, then walk forward.
- Do not stand directly in front of the oven door, refrigerator door, microwave or other appliance you are trying to open. Instead stand slightly to the side and use a power stance – wide apart, staggered feet – with one hand on a stable surface.

If a Fall Occurs

- Remain calm. Feel and look for any pain or possible injuries before you try to get up. Plan your strategy carefully.
- Use a heavy piece of furniture to assist you in getting up. If you doubt your ability to safely get up alone, crawl or scoot to a phone and call for help.

If you are someone who frequently falls, it is recommended that you enroll in a home emergency response system. A physical therapist can also help you prepare a system in case a fall occurs.

Care partners should also know how to help someone get up after a fall. A transfer belt can provide you with a firm grip to aid the person as he or she rises.

Detailed instructions for how to get up from a fall, along with more posture and balance information and tips, can be found in the Parkinson's Foundation publication *Fitness Counts*. Call the Helpline at 1-800-4PD-INFO (1-800-474-4636) to get your free copy.

Source: <https://www.parkinson.org/understanding-parkinsons/movement-symptoms/postural-instability>

HOW TO SAFELY PICK A LOVED ONE (OR YOURSELF) UP AFTER A FALL

Falls are a common occurrence for seniors, and, as many family caregivers know, they can be very frightening. Once the initial shock wears off, family members are often left wondering how to get an elder up off the floor and back on their feet.

Who to Call When an Elderly Person Falls

First and foremost, family caregivers need (or should request) help with handling senior falls. Unfortunately, deciding whose help you need isn't always easy. The answer to this question depends on a variety of factors, the most important of which is whether the senior was injured in the fall. It is always safest to call 911 for emergency help.

Even if medical assistance isn't required, first responders can provide the brawn to get a loved one off the floor safely and the expertise to confirm whether they need to go to the hospital for testing and/or treatment.

It is extremely common for a panicked caregiver to hurt themselves while trying to pick up a senior after a fall. This can have long-lasting consequences and prevent one from seeing to their caregiving duties for days, weeks or longer, depending on the severity of the injury. Taking matters into your own hands also puts your loved one at risk of being dropped or maneuvered incorrectly. If there is any doubt that you and your care recipient cannot handle the situation safely, call your local non-emergency police and fire numbers to request that EMTs or the fire department come out for what is called a "lift assist."

Below are some general guidelines that can help you get a loved one upright, without hurting them (or yourself) in the process. Keep in mind that

these strategies should only be used when you know your loved one hasn't sustained an injury. Excess movement can cause further harm.

What to Do if an Elderly Person Falls Down

- Stay calm and help your loved one to remain calm by encouraging them to take slow, deep breaths.
- Examine them for injuries like bruises, bleeding, possible sprains and broken bones.
- Ask them if they are experiencing any pain, where it is located and how severe it is.
- If they have a serious injury (e.g., a broken bone, bleeding), then don't move them. Call 911 and keep your loved one as warm, comfortable and still as possible until help arrives.
- If they aren't badly hurt and they want to get up, proceed slowly. Stop at any point if they become stuck, experience pain or become too tired to get all the way up.
- Find two sturdy chairs. Place one next to the senior's head and the other down by their feet. Keep in mind that your loved one must be capable of doing the physical work required to get up. Your role is to help guide them through these steps and keep them steady, **not** lift their weight. If they cannot do this, then call to request a lift assist.
- Help your loved one roll over onto their side and assist them in getting onto their hands and knees. If they suffer from sore knees, place a towel beneath them to make this step more comfortable.
- Move the chair closest to their head directly in front of where they are so they can rise up to place their hands evenly on the seat and assume a kneeling position.
- Ask the senior to lean forward on the seat as they bring their strongest leg forward, leading with the knee to place their foot flat on the floor. The senior should look like they are in a kneeling lunge at the end of this step.
- Move the second chair directly behind your loved one, then ask them to use both arms and legs to push themselves up and sit back into this chair. You can use your hands to keep your loved one steady, but keep your back upright and make sure they are doing the physical

- work to lift themselves.
- Keep the senior seated until you're confident they can stand and continue moving around without hurting themselves or falling again.
- Immediately notify their doctor that they've had a fall and keep an eye out for emerging pain and signs of injury.

How to Get Back Up After You Have Fallen

Much as we'd like to hope so, family caregivers aren't immune to falling. Commit these steps to memory to ensure you're prepared if you take a spill.

- Stay calm and take a few deep breaths.
- Examine yourself for injuries.
- If you find that you are injured or unable to get up, try to alert someone to your predicament. While you're waiting for help, try to keep warm and stay calm.
- If you are confident you haven't broken any bones or experienced a serious injury, search for the nearest piece of sturdy furniture (a chair would be ideal).
- Slowly roll onto your side and then work to get onto your hands and knees.
- Crawl or drag yourself over to the piece of furniture.
- Get into a kneeling position and place your hands on a stable part of the piece of furniture (e.g., the seat of a chair).
- Choose your strongest leg and move that knee forward to place your foot flat on the floor. You should end up in a kneeling lunge with your hands still on the piece of furniture for support.
- Using your arms and legs simultaneously, push yourself up and pivot around until you're sitting on the piece of furniture.
- Stay seated until you're confident you can move around without hurting yourself or falling again.

- Once you are up, notify your doctor that you've had a fall and keep an eye out for emerging pain or signs of injury.

Falls Should Never Remain Secret

Even though one in every four adults aged 65 and older experiences a fall each year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that fewer than half of these individuals tell their physician about it. Seniors often consider falls embarrassing indicators of their decline and impending reliance on others for assistance. It's natural to want to downplay these incidents, but doing so may actually limit an older adult's independence in the long run because it prevents them from receiving proper support and learning about fall prevention measures. In fact, research has shown that falling once doubles a senior's chances of falling again. Repeated falls are indicative of an underlying problem that requires medical attention and should not be ignored. Frequent falls increase the risk of incurring a fall-related injury, such as a broken hip or a head injury, and often lead seniors to limit their everyday activities out of fear.

Awareness of this problem gives family members the opportunity to improve home safety measures and allows doctors to work with their patients to find solutions. This is crucial if falls are becoming more frequent. Small efforts like reducing clutter, installing grab bars, using a mobility aid, altering prescription medications, participating in physical and/or occupational therapy, and purchasing a medical alert system can make all the difference.

Regardless of whether it is you or your aging loved one who experiences a fall, it's essential to notify a doctor about the event. He or she can make sure no injuries were sustained and suggest ways to prevent future tumbles.

Source: <https://www.agingcare.com/articles/pick-up-a-senior-after-a-fall-170447>

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