

Fear of Falling and Depression in Older Adults

Surprisingly, the fear of falling is a major cause of isolation in older adults and isolation is one of the most important factors in depression. As we age, our worlds naturally become smaller. We retire and no longer have to leave home for work, we lose touch with friends and acquaintances - they move away or become ill and pass away, we don't want to go places alone and, as a result, remain at home. Certainly, the inability to continue driving contributes to the problem. It is regarded as a loss of independence but, in a very immediate sense, it interferes with our ability to get around.

Many seniors withdraw because they have a fear of falling. This fear can hold them back from socializing and staying active. Being alone inside the house can cause depression and further remove an older adult from contact with the outside world. Since falling and depression may not seem directly linked, many care-givers do not recognize the connection. But isolation and depression go hand-in-hand.

Implementing a simple fall prevention program can assist your loved one and empower them to get on with their lives, forestalling the onset of depression. Conduct a home safety assessment. Identify areas in the home where modifications will help reduce falls. Eliminate the necessity for negotiating stairs wherever possible. If necessary, relocate the washer and dryer from a basement. Install grab bars in the bathroom. Remove obstacles that can create hazards. Replace or refit carpeting that has stretched and eliminate area rugs that are slippery or do not remain in place. If installed carpeting has stretched, have it re-fitted. Suggest exercises that improve balance and strengthen legs. Exercise together to encourage an increase in endurance that will help build confidence, combat the fear of falling and promote physical safety and mental stability. Making an aging adult feel safer at home often makes them feel more comfortable leaving the house.