

Patient Education Sheet

Chemotherapy Infusion Suite (CIS): Partnering to Prevent Falls

Falls are a leading cause of injury and can occur anytime.

Risk Factors for Falls

- Fall risk increases with age
- Poor eyesight or hearing loss
- Conditions that cause balance changes
- Muscle weakness and fatigue
- Depression, memory changes
- Urine and bladder problems
- Bone disease and joint problems
- Decreased sensation in feet or hands
- Heart problems that cause blood pressure fluctuation or irregular heartbeat

<u>Medications</u>: Certain medications may contribute to falls including those that make you tired, dizzy or confused. These may include:

- Anti-anxiety pills
- Pain medications
- Sleep aids
- Blood pressure medicine
- Chemotherapy
- Stool softeners
- Steroids
- Water pills

Environmental factors, hazards in the home and outside the home:

- Loose objects such as area rugs, furniture, electrical cords
- Poor lighting, particularly areas such as hallways or rooms without an overhead light
- Stairs
- Lack of bathroom safety equipment
- Walkways or roads made slippery from ice, water or fallen leaves
- Uneven pavement

What might I experience as a result of cancer treatments?

Cancer treatments may have certain side effects that can place cancer patients at risk for falls, including:

- Peripheral neuropathy a decrease in sensation and tingling in the fingers and toes; trouble using your fingers to pick up or hold things; trouble with tripping or stumbling while walking
- **Postural hypotension** a drop in blood pressure when moving from a sitting or lying position to a standing position.
- Anemia- low blood cell counts make you feel more tired. Your ability to perform regular physical activities may become more difficult.
- Electrolyte imbalances (such as potassium, sodium, magnesium, calcium) are common and can cause weakening of the heart, muscles and nervous system, as well as changes in mental status.
- Changes in nervous system and thought processes the body's ability to coordinate movement can be decreased and cause unsteadiness. Changes in walking patterns can occur without you even realizing it.

Not all chemotherapy agents cause these conditions – ask your nurse if you are at risk.

What will staff in CIS do to help prevent falls?

Here in the Chemotherapy Infusion Suite we are committed to keeping our patients safe. Fall reduction measures are used to help reduce the risk of fall or injury.

1. Fall risk assessment: The nurses will assess your fall risk at each visit. This includes checking your blood pressure and gait, and asking questions regarding changes in your physical and mental status, such as increased weakness or delirium.

- Please let staff know if you have any changes in the way you feel or think, if you feel off balance, or if you have fallen.
- Make sure you tell the staff what caused the fall (whether you tripped, got dizzy, lost your balance, or felt your legs "go out" from under you). This information will be used to help you avoid falling again.
- Make sure to bring all of your medication with you to your doctor's visit.
- **2. Hourly Rounding:** The nursing staff will check on you at least once an hour to ensure your comfort, provide you with assistance, and assist you to the bathroom.

What can I do to prevent falls?

- 1. Use the Nurse Call Button: The nursing staff will teach you how to use the nurse call button. Staff will make sure it is easy for you to reach. It is important to press the call button and ask for help before getting out of the chair by yourself. This will prevent falls.
- **2.** Use your Walking Aids: It is strongly recommended that you bring your cane or walker (if you use one) with you when you come for your appointments for treatment.

How can you prevent falls at home?

Research shows that simple safety modifications at home, where 70% of falls occur, can reduce your risk.

Living areas

- Remove loose area rugs or tack them down and use only rugs with nonskid backing.
- Keep cords away from areas where you walk, tape them down if needed
- Place a lamp by your bed within easy reach
- Use nightlights or motion-sensor lights in bedrooms, hallways and bathrooms, stairs
- Put hand rails on both sides of any steps or stairs in or outside your home.
- Use bath mat or no slip decals in the tub or shower.
- Add grab bars near toilet and bathtub
- Remove clutter in doorways, hallways, stairs
- Clean up spills immediately
- Never stand on a chair

• Use caution in the winter with ice and snow

Personal care

- Wear good shoes closed toe shoes with nonskid soles are best
- Don't walk in your socks or bare feet
- Go slowly from a lying position to standing if you are dizzy sit first before standing
- Use assistive devices canes, walkers, glasses, hearing aids (Bring these to your appointments!)
- Exercise to improve strength, balance and coordination
- If you live alone, consider getting an emergency system that you can wear around your wrist or neck to alert help immediately if you fall

Inform your doctor if:

- You have been feeling groggy, dizzy or faint
- You have fallen or had a near fall
- You feel you need physical therapy for mobility, balance or strengthening

Sources:

- <u>Healthinaging.org</u>
- www.cdc.gov/homeandrecreationalsafety/ falls
- American Geriatrics Society 2010
 AGS/BGS Clinical Practice Guidelines:
 Prevention of Fall in older persons
- Ganz, et al. (2007) Will my patient fall?

Sources:

Healthinaging.org

American Geriatrics Society 2010 AGS/BGS Clinical Practice Guidelines: Prevention of Fall in older persons

Boyle.(2006) Delirium in older adults with cancer: implications for practice and research Oncology Nursing Forum;33(1)

Ganz, et al. (2007) Will my patient fall? 5/2013