



Preventing Falls: A Defensive Approach

J. Thomas Hutton M.D. Ph.D.

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The risk of serious injury resulting from a fall increases with age as our eyesight, ability to react quickly, memory, and cognitive functions begin to decline. For the growing population of people over age 65, falls can lead to loss of dignity and independence, and they can cause serious injury or even death.

Preventing Falls is an essential guide for the elderly, caregivers, Parkinson's sufferers, and many others who face this health risk in their daily lives. As people age, knowing how to accommodate motor, sensory, and cognitive changes is important. While no single cause for a fall exists, the leading factors are environmental hazards, balance problems, muscle weakness, poor vision, and impaired judgment. Parkinson's patients as well as those with various neurological or muscular disorders are especially prone to falls because their motor skills are seriously compromised. This book addresses valuable skills and coping mechanisms as well as environmental changes and assistive devices that are needed to prevent falls.

Many elderly victims of a fall require the skilled care of a nursing home within a year of the incident, especially those elders who cannot care for themselves and whose family members are unable to provide adequate help. The editors place emphasis on "successful aging"-the ability to maintain mobility and remain independent. *Preventing Falls* is a handy guidebook for elders to decrease their risk of falls, develop personal confidence, and maintain their independence. This vital sourcebook is complemented with a valuable 60-minute videotape offering step-by-step instruction on the best methods for preventing falls.

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