

Helping People with Intellectual Disabilities (ID) Prevent Falls

Falls can cause injuries that make it hard to live as independently as possible. Many people who fall once develop a fear of falling. This fear may cause them to be inactive, which only increases the risk of falling in the future.¹

According to findings from over 1,300 adults with ID participating in The Arc's HealthMeet assessments, 17 percent fell at home in the past year. While many consider falling an issue only for older adults, these findings came from respondents ages 14 or older. This suggests that people with ID of all ages may be more likely to fall and may need more help to avoid falls at home.

Luckily, falling is preventable.

There are many steps that people with ID can take to reduce the risk of falling.

EXERCISE

Doing exercises that improve leg strength and balance are especially beneficial for reducing rates of falls. Tai Chi programs are especially helpful in improving these areas.

REVIEW MEDICATIONS WITH DOCTORS AND PHARMACISTS

Medicines may cause side effects like dizziness or drowsiness that may make people more likely to fall.

VISIT THE EYE DOCTOR

Having eyes checked and a prescription updated once a year can help make sure that a person with ID sees potential falling hazards.

MAKE HOME IMPROVEMENTS

Add grab bars inside and outside a tub or shower and next to a toilet. Consider adding railings on both sides of the stairways or improving lighting in a home. These home improvements can reduce the risk of falls.

FIND A FALLS PREVENTION PROGRAM IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Identify falls prevention programs in your community. While often targeted to seniors, these programs may be helpful to you and your family. Contact your state Department of Aging to find a senior center near you.

CONTACT THE ARC

If you have more questions or need help, please call The Arc at 1-800-433-5255.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Falls Among Older Adults: An Overview", <http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Falls/adultfalls.html>