

DR. VERA'S
DEMENTIA ACTION MANUALS

stop the falls!

and keep them on their feet



An OT's Room-by-Room Plan to Prevent
Falls and Injuries at Home

DR. FERNANDO VERA, OT

DR. VERA'S DEMENTIA ACTION MANUALS • BOOK 3

STOP THE FALLS!

An OT's Room-by-Room Plan to Prevent Falls and Injuries at Home

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StartEmpowering.com

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Important: This manual is for education and support. It does not replace medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Every person and home is different. Talk with the doctor, a physical therapist or an occupational therapist about fall risks, equipment and exercise. In an emergency, call 911.

Names used in the sample phrases are examples.

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One fall can change everything.

If you're reading this, maybe your loved one has already fallen. Maybe you've caught them just in time, or found them on the floor. Or maybe you just have that knot in your stomach every time they stand up.

Falls are one of the biggest dangers for people with dementia. One broken hip can mean a hospital stay, a nursing home, or a loss of independence that never comes back.

As an occupational therapist, preventing falls is at the heart of what I do. And here's the good news: **most falls are preventable.** Not with bubble wrap, but with the right home setup, the right habits and the right equipment.

This manual walks you through 25 of the most common fall risks, room by room and move by move. Each page shows you what to say, what to do and what to change.

Start with the S.T.E.P. method on page 6. Then walk through your home with this book in hand.

Every grab bar you install and every rug you remove is a fall that may never happen.

Fernando

Dr. Fernando Vera, OT

Check it. Fix it. Follow up.

Every fall risk gets a two-page spread. The left page helps you spot the problem and fix it, step by step. The right page gives you the words to say, a shopping list and when to check again.

THE RISK

What the danger looks like at home, so you can spot it early.

1 • QUICK CHECK

A short checklist. Tick what applies to your family to see if this page is for you.

3 • WHAT TO SAY

Word-for-word phrases you can use right away.

4 • FOLLOW UP

When to check again, and when to call a professional.

WHY IT HAPPENS

The reasons behind the risk. Knowing the reason often shows you the fix.

2 • ACTION PLAN

Numbered steps in the order to do them, each with a cost tag.

YOUR SHOPPING LIST

What to buy, why it helps and roughly what it costs.

Dr. Vera's tip

One practical trick from the clinic and from caring for my own mother.

DO THIS NOW

DO THIS MONTH

WHEN YOU CAN

Every topic has a badge so you know what matters most.

Three rules that apply to every page

1. Never rush. Most falls happen in a hurry.
2. Clear the path before you walk it.
3. If they fall, check before you lift.

Prevent falls with **S.T.E.P.**

Falls rarely have one cause. These four areas cover nearly every fall I see in my clinic. Work through all four.

S Scan the home

- Clear floors and walkways
- Bright, even lighting
- Remove rugs and cords
- Contrast on steps and edges

T Timing & toileting

- Never rush
- Regular bathroom trips
- Extra time for everything
- Watch the tired times of day

E Equipment

- Grab bars, not towel bars
- Walker in reach, fitted right
- Good shoes, no socks
- Shower chair and raised seat

P Physical health

- Medication review every year
- Eye exam and clean glasses
- Daily leg strength practice
- Water and regular meals

A clear path and a slow pace prevent most falls.

BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE

After a fall, stop and check before you lift.

Stay calm. Rushing to pull someone up can turn a scare into an injury, for them or for you.

Check these first

- ✓ Are they breathing and responding?
- ✓ Did they hit their head?
- ✓ Any pain, especially hip or wrist?
- ✓ Is a leg short or turned out?
- ✓ Any bleeding or new confusion?
- ✓ Are they on blood thinners?
- ✓ Can they move arms and legs?

Call 911 right away if

- ! They hit their head and take blood thinners
- ! They can't get up or you can't lift safely
- ! Severe pain or a possible broken bone
- ! New confusion, weakness or slurred speech
- ! Trouble breathing or chest pain
- ! They were on the floor for a long time

Not an emergency, but you can't get them up safely? Call your local non-emergency number and ask for a 'lift assist.' If you're unsure, call 911.

Never lift alone

part one

Know the Risk



The hidden reasons behind falls: blood pressure, medications, vision and strength.

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-

Remember S.T.E.P.

Scan the home • **T**iming & toileting • **E**quipment • **P**hysical health

01

Standing Up Too Fast: Dizziness and Blood Pressure Drops

DO THIS NOW

THE RISK

Wobbling, grabbing furniture or sitting back down right after standing up, especially in the morning.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Blood pressure can drop when standing (orthostatic hypotension). Dehydration and some medications make it worse.

1 QUICK CHECK Is this a problem at your house?

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ They wobble or grab furniture right after standing up. | ☐ They've nearly fainted or had to sit back down. |
| ☐ They say they feel dizzy or 'woozy' when they get up. | ☐ They take blood pressure or water pills. |
| ☐ Dizziness is worse in the morning or after meals. | ☐ They don't drink much during the day. |

Checked 2 or more? Start the action plan below.

2 ACTION PLAN Do these in order

1 Teach the 'sit, pump, stand, pause' routine.

1

Sit on the edge, pump the ankles 10 times, stand, then pause before walking.

FREE

2 Put water on the nightstand.

2

A glass of water before getting up helps blood pressure in the morning.

FREE

3 Place a sturdy grab handle where they stand up.

3

Beside the bed and favorite chair, so there's something safe to hold.

\$\$

4 Ask the doctor for a lying-and-standing blood pressure check.

4

It shows whether blood pressure drops when they stand.

FREE

Cost: **FREE** • \$ under \$25 • \$\$ \$25–\$100 • \$\$\$ over \$100

What to say and follow-up on the next page →

01

Standing Up Too Fast: Dizziness and Blood Pressure Drops

continued

3

WHAT TO SAY

Short, calm cues they can follow

say
this

"Sit for a moment. No rush."
"Wiggle your toes and pump your feet."
"Feeling steady? Okay, let's go."

+

YOUR SHOPPING LIST

ITEM	WHY IT HELPS	COST
☐ Bed assist handle	Something safe to hold when standing	\$\$
☐ Water bottle with a straw	Easy morning drinks	\$
☐ Blood pressure monitor	Track readings for the doctor	\$\$

4

FOLLOW UP

CHECK AGAIN IN 1 WEEK

Watch them stand up in the morning. Do they pause and steady themselves before walking?

CALL A PRO IF

They get dizzy often, nearly faint, or fall after standing. Ask for a blood pressure and medication check.

Dr. Vera's tip

Teach the '10-second rule': sit on the edge, count to 10 together, then stand. Make it a habit, not a warning.

02

Medications That Cause Falls

DO THIS NOW

THE RISK

More unsteady, sleepy or confused after a new medication or a dose change.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Sleep aids, anxiety medicines, antidepressants, antipsychotics, blood pressure pills and some pain medicines raise fall risk.

1 QUICK CHECK Is this a problem at your house?

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ They take 4 or more medications. | ☐ A medication was started or changed recently. |
| ☐ They take a sleep aid, anxiety pill or 'PM' medicine. | ☐ They've fallen more since a medication change. |
| ☐ They're sleepier or more confused than usual. | ☐ No one has reviewed all their medications in the last year. |

Checked 2 or more? Start the action plan below.

2 ACTION PLAN Do these in order

1

Gather every pill bottle, vitamin and cream in one bag.

Include over-the-counter and 'as needed' medicines.

FREE

2

Book a 'brown bag' medication review with the doctor or pharmacist.

Ask them to look for medicines that raise fall risk.

FREE

3

Read labels for 'PM,' 'diphenhydramine' and 'may cause drowsiness.'

Set aside anything that could cause dizziness until you ask.

FREE

4

Keep one up-to-date medication list in your wallet.

Bring it to every appointment and the ER.

FREE

Cost: **FREE** • \$ under \$25 • \$\$ \$25–\$100 • \$\$\$ over \$100

What to say and follow-up on the next page →

02

Medications That Cause Falls

continued

3

WHAT TO SAY

Short, calm cues they can follow

say
this

"Is this medication on the list of risky drugs for older adults?"

"Is there a safer option?"

"Can we lower the dose?"

+

YOUR SHOPPING LIST

ITEM	WHY IT HELPS	COST
☐ Pill organizer with a lock	Right dose, right time	\$\$
☐ Medication list card	Ready for every appointment	FREE
☐ One pharmacy for everything	Automatic interaction checks	FREE

4

FOLLOW UP

CHECK AGAIN AFTER ANY CHANGE

For one week after any new medicine or dose change, watch for dizziness, sleepiness or new confusion.

CALL A PRO IF

They're more unsteady, sleepy or confused after a new medication or dose change.

Dr. Vera's tip

Put every bottle in a bag and bring it to the doctor, including vitamins and creams. It's called a 'brown bag review,' and it catches problems.



Vision and Depth Perception Changes

DO THIS MONTH

THE RISK

Missing steps, stepping over shadows, misjudging chairs, or trouble seeing edges and floors.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Dementia can change how the brain processes what the eyes see. Aging eyes also need more light and contrast.

1 QUICK CHECK Is this a problem at your house?

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ They miss steps or trip on edges. | ☐ Their glasses are old, scratched or dirty. |
| ☐ They step over shadows or dark rugs. | ☐ Rooms or hallways are dim. |
| ☐ They misjudge where the chair or toilet is. | ☐ Floors, steps and rugs are all similar colors. |

Checked 2 or more? Start the action plan below.

2 ACTION PLAN Do these in order

1

Book a yearly eye exam and clean their glasses daily.

An old prescription or smudged lenses blur edges and steps.

\$\$

2

Add contrasting tape to step edges.

Bright tape shows exactly where each step ends.

\$

3

Brighten hallways, stairs and the bathroom.

Use bright, warm bulbs with no glare.

\$

4

Remove dark mats and busy patterned rugs.

Dark mats can look like holes; patterns hide edges.

FREE

Cost: **FREE** · \$ under \$25 · \$\$ \$25–\$100 · \$\$\$ over \$100

What to say and follow-up on the next page →

03

Vision and Depth Perception Changes

continued

3

WHAT TO SAY

Short, calm cues they can follow

say
this

"The chair is right behind you."

"Step up now."

"Let me turn on the light."

+

YOUR SHOPPING LIST

ITEM	WHY IT HELPS	COST
☐ Contrasting step tape	Shows the edge of every step	\$
☐ Bright LED bulbs	Fewer shadows	\$
☐ Solid, contrasting toilet seat	Easier to see and target	\$\$

4

FOLLOW UP

CHECK AGAIN IN 1 MONTH

Walk their routes at dusk. Can you clearly see every step, edge and chair?

CALL A PRO IF

They suddenly bump into things, miss objects, or vision seems worse. See the eye doctor too.

Dr. Vera's tip

Black mats can look like holes to a person with dementia. If they step around a dark rug, remove it.

04

Weak Legs and Poor Balance

DO THIS MONTH

THE RISK

Shuffling, holding onto furniture, trouble getting up from a chair, or unsteady turning.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Less activity, aging muscles and dementia-related changes in walking and balance.

1 QUICK CHECK Is this a problem at your house?

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ They shuffle or take small steps. | ☐ They sit most of the day. |
| ☐ They hold onto furniture to walk. | ☐ Turning around makes them unsteady. |
| ☐ They need their arms to push up from a chair. | ☐ They've stopped walking outside. |

Checked 2 or more? Start the action plan below.

2 ACTION PLAN Do these in order

1

Practice sit-to-stand 5 times, twice a day.

Use a sturdy chair with arms; stand by for safety.

FREE

2

Walk together every day.

Start with 5 minutes and build up.

FREE

3

Ask the doctor for a PT or OT referral.

A therapist can build strength and balance safely.

\$

4

Turn TV commercials into exercise breaks.

March in place or do seated leg lifts.

FREE

Cost: FREE • \$ under \$25 • \$\$ \$25–\$100 • \$\$\$ over \$100

What to say and follow-up on the next page →

04

Weak Legs and Poor Balance

continued

3

WHAT TO SAY

Short, calm cues they can follow

say
this

"Let's march in place during the commercials."

"Let's walk to the mailbox together."

"Show me how strong those legs are!"

+

YOUR SHOPPING LIST

ITEM	WHY IT HELPS	COST
☐ Sturdy chair with arms	Safe exercise and standing	\$\$
☐ Good walking shoes	Support and grip	\$\$
☐ Light ankle weights (if the therapist agrees)	Build leg strength	\$

4

FOLLOW UP

CHECK AGAIN IN 1 MONTH

Time how long it takes to stand up 5 times. Is it getting easier?

CALL A PRO IF

Walking or balance gets worse quickly, or they're falling more. Ask for a PT or OT evaluation.

Dr. Vera's tip

Turn TV commercials into exercise breaks: stand up, sit down, march in place. Ten breaks a night adds up.

part two

Room by Room



Walk through your home with an OT's eye and fix the danger zones.

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Remember S.T.E.P.

Scan the home • **T**iming & toileting • **E**quipment • **P**hysical health

05

The Bathroom: Getting On and Off the Toilet

DO THIS NOW

THE RISK

Plopping down hard, pulling on towel bars, or struggling to stand up from a low toilet.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Toilets are low, bathrooms are tight and slippery, and people often rush when they need to go.

1 QUICK CHECK Is this a problem at your house?

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ They pull on the towel bar, sink or toilet paper holder to stand up. | ☐ There's no grab bar within reach of the toilet. |
| ☐ They drop down hard onto the seat. | ☐ The bathroom floor is slippery or has a loose mat. |
| ☐ They need more than one try to stand up. | ☐ The path to the bathroom is dark at night. |

Checked 2 or more? Start the action plan below.

2 ACTION PLAN Do these in order

1 Remove the towel bar next to the toilet.

People grab whatever is there, and towel bars aren't built to hold body weight.

FREE

2 Install a grab bar where they naturally reach.

Anchor it into wall studs. Suction-cup bars are not safe for body weight.

\$\$

3 Add a raised toilet seat with arms, or a toilet safety frame.

A higher seat and something to push on make sitting and standing much easier.

\$\$

4 Swap slippery mats for rubber-backed ones and light the path.

A motion-sensor night light from bed to toilet prevents many night falls.

\$

Cost: FREE · \$ under \$25 · \$\$ \$25–\$100 · \$\$\$ over \$100

What to say and follow-up on the next page →

05

The Bathroom: Getting On and Off the Toilet

continued

3

WHAT TO SAY

Short, calm cues they can follow

say
this

"Hands on the bars. Now sit slowly."

"Scoot forward, nose over toes, and stand."

"I'm right here."

+

YOUR SHOPPING LIST

ITEM	WHY IT HELPS	COST
☐ Raised toilet seat with arms	Easier to sit and stand	\$\$
☐ Grab bar (installed into studs)	Safe place to hold	\$\$
☐ Rubber-backed bath mat	Stops sliding	\$
☐ Motion-sensor night lights	Safe nighttime trips	\$

4

FOLLOW UP

CHECK AGAIN IN 2 WEEKS

Watch them use the toilet. Can they sit down and stand up without grabbing anything but the bars?

CALL A PRO IF

They can't get on or off the toilet safely, or they've fallen in the bathroom. Ask for an OT home safety visit.

Dr. Vera's tip

Remove the towel bar next to the toilet and put in a real grab bar. People will always grab whatever is there.

06 The Shower and Tub

DO THIS NOW

THE RISK

Slipping, stepping over a high tub edge, or standing on wet floors without support.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Wet surfaces, stepping over the tub, soap, steam and fear make the shower the riskiest spot at home.

1 QUICK CHECK Is this a problem at your house?

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ They stand in the shower. | ☐ The tub or shower floor is slippery. |
| ☐ They step over a high tub wall. | ☐ They get out of the shower with wet feet on tile. |
| ☐ There are no grab bars in or near the shower. | ☐ They're afraid of the shower or rush through it. |

Checked 2 or more? Start the action plan below.

2 ACTION PLAN Do these in order

1

Get a shower chair or tub transfer bench.

They sit first, then swing their legs over the tub wall.

\$\$

2

Install a handheld shower head.

Washing while seated is safer and feels less scary.

\$\$

3

Add non-slip strips inside the tub and a rubber-backed mat outside.

Wet surfaces are the biggest bathroom hazard.

\$

4

Put grab bars inside and at the entry of the shower.

Anchored into studs, where their hands naturally go.

\$\$

Cost: **FREE** · \$ under \$25 · \$\$ \$25–\$100 · \$\$\$ over \$100

What to say and follow-up on the next page →

06 The Shower and Tub

continued

3 WHAT TO SAY Short, calm cues they can follow

say
this

"Sit on the bench first."

"Hold the bar while I help you."

"Let's dry off sitting down."

+ YOUR SHOPPING LIST

ITEM	WHY IT HELPS	COST
☐ Tub transfer bench	Sit first, no stepping over	\$\$
☐ Handheld shower head	Wash while seated	\$\$
☐ Non-slip strips	Grip in the tub	\$
☐ Grab bars	Support in and out	\$\$

4 FOLLOW UP

CHECK AGAIN AFTER 3 SHOWERS

Are they sitting the whole time and getting in and out without stepping over the wall?

CALL A PRO IF

They've slipped or are afraid to shower. An OT can recommend the right equipment.

Dr. Vera's tip

Put a towel on the shower chair before they sit. It's warmer, less slippery and feels less clinical.

07

The Bedroom: Getting In and Out of Bed

DO THIS NOW

THE RISK

Sliding off the edge, rolling out of bed, or struggling to sit up and stand in the morning or at night.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Beds that are too high or too low, soft mattresses, sleepy muscles and dark rooms.

1 QUICK CHECK Is this a problem at your house?

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ The bed is very high or very low. | ☐ There's no light they can reach from bed. |
| ☐ They slide off the edge of the mattress. | ☐ The path from bed to bathroom is cluttered or dark. |
| ☐ They've rolled or fallen out of bed. | |
| ☐ They struggle to sit up in the morning. | |

Checked 2 or more? Start the action plan below.

2 ACTION PLAN Do these in order

1

Adjust bed height so feet rest flat with knees at a right angle.

Use bed risers or a lower frame as needed.

\$

2

Add a bed assist handle.

Safer than full bed rails, which can trap limbs.

\$\$

3

Teach the log roll: roll to the side, legs down, push up.

It uses their strength and avoids twisting.

FREE

4

Put a touch lamp or motion light by the bed.

They should never get up in the dark.

\$

Cost: FREE · \$ under \$25 · \$\$ \$25–\$100 · \$\$\$ over \$100

What to say and follow-up on the next page →

07

The Bedroom: Getting In and Out of Bed

continued

3

WHAT TO SAY

Short, calm cues they can follow

say
this

"Roll toward me."
"Feet on the floor."
"Push with your hands and sit up."

+

YOUR SHOPPING LIST

ITEM	WHY IT HELPS	COST
☐ Bed assist handle	Support for sitting and standing	\$\$
☐ Touch lamp or motion light	Light before the first step	\$
☐ Floor mat by the bed (if they roll out)	Softens a fall	\$\$

4

FOLLOW UP

CHECK AGAIN IN 2 WEEKS

Watch them get out of bed in the morning. Are they using the handle and the log roll?

CALL A PRO IF

They've fallen out of bed or can't get up safely. Ask for an OT evaluation.

Dr. Vera's tip

Stand in their spot and try getting up in the dark. You'll find the problem faster than any checklist.

08

Stairs and Steps

DO THIS NOW

THE RISK

Missing steps, holding one rail, carrying things on stairs, or climbing when tired.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Stairs require balance, strength, vision and attention at once.

1 QUICK CHECK Is this a problem at your house?

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ There's a rail on only one side, or none. | ☐ Step edges are hard to see. |
| ☐ The stairs are dim. | ☐ Items are left on the stairs. |
| ☐ They carry things up and down the stairs. | ☐ They go up and down stairs at night. |

Checked 2 or more? Start the action plan below.

2 ACTION PLAN Do these in order

1

Clear everything off the stairs.

Put a basket at the bottom for items to carry later.

FREE

2

Add sturdy handrails on both sides, full length.

Two rails give support in both directions.

\$\$\$

3

Light the top and bottom, with switches at both ends.

No one should climb stairs in the dark.

\$\$

4

Mark every step edge with contrasting tape.

Shows where each step ends.

\$

Cost: FREE • \$ under \$25 • \$\$ \$25–\$100 • \$\$\$ over \$100

What to say and follow-up on the next page →

08

Stairs and Steps

continued

3

WHAT TO SAY

Short, calm cues they can follow

say
this

"One step at a time."
"Hold the rail with both hands."
"I'm right behind you."

+

YOUR SHOPPING LIST

ITEM	WHY IT HELPS	COST
☐ Second handrail	Support on both sides	\$\$\$
☐ Contrasting step tape	Clear step edges	\$
☐ Stair lighting	No dark steps	\$\$
☐ Stair basket	Hands free for the rails	\$

4

FOLLOW UP

CHECK AGAIN IN 1 MONTH

Consider whether they could live on one floor. If stairs are still hard, it may be time to move the bedroom downstairs.

CALL A PRO IF

They've fallen or nearly fallen on stairs. Ask about a PT/OT evaluation or living on one floor.

Dr. Vera's tip

If there's a single thing you move for safety, move the bedroom downstairs.

09 The Kitchen

DO THIS MONTH

THE RISK

Climbing to reach high shelves, slipping on spills, or losing balance carrying hot items.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Reaching, bending, wet floors and carrying all happen in the kitchen.

1 QUICK CHECK Is this a problem at your house?

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Everyday items are on high shelves. | ☐ Pet bowls sit in walkways. |
| ☐ They use a step stool or chair to reach. | ☐ They carry hot or heavy items. |
| ☐ Spills are left on the floor. | ☐ The floor near the sink gets wet and slippery. |

Checked 2 or more? Start the action plan below.

2 ACTION PLAN Do these in order

1

Move everyday items to waist-to-shoulder height.

Dishes, food and pans they use daily should be easy to reach.

FREE

2

Remove the step stool from the house.

If it's there, it will get used.

FREE

3

Put a rubber-backed mat by the sink.

Catches drips and gives grip.

\$

4

Offer a stool with a back for kitchen tasks.

Sitting to cook or wash is safer than standing long.

\$\$

Cost: FREE · \$ under \$25 · \$\$ \$25–\$100 · \$\$\$ over \$100

What to say and follow-up on the next page →

09 The Kitchen

continued

3 WHAT TO SAY Short, calm cues they can follow

say
this

"Let's put this where you can reach it."
"I'll carry the hot things."
"Let's sit while we work."

+ YOUR SHOPPING LIST

ITEM	WHY IT HELPS	COST
☐ Rubber-backed kitchen mat	Grip near the sink	\$
☐ Stool with a back	Sit for tasks	\$\$
☐ Lightweight dishes and pots	Easier to carry	\$\$

4 FOLLOW UP

CHECK AGAIN IN 2 WEEKS

Watch them in the kitchen. Are they reaching up high or climbing for anything?

CALL A PRO IF

They're falling while cooking or reaching. An OT can adapt the kitchen.

Dr. Vera's tip

Give away the step stool. If it's in the house, someone will use it.



Rugs, Cords and Clutter

DO THIS NOW

THE RISK

Tripping over throw rugs, cords, shoes, pet toys and piles on the floor.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Shuffling feet, poor vision and distraction make small obstacles big hazards.

1

QUICK CHECK Is this a problem at your house?

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ There are throw rugs in the house. | ☐ Walkways are narrower than 3 feet. |
| ☐ Cords run across walkways. | ☐ Pet toys or bowls are in walking paths. |
| ☐ Shoes, bags or mail pile up on the floor. | ☐ Furniture sticks out into paths. |

Checked 2 or more? Start the action plan below.

2

ACTION PLAN Do these in order

1

Remove throw rugs, or tape them down with rubber backing.

FREE

Loose rugs are one of the most common trip hazards.

2

Run cords along walls or use cord covers.

\$

Nothing should cross a walking path.

3

Clear walkways to at least 3 feet wide.

FREE

Move furniture out of the way.

4

Add a basket by the door for shoes and bags.

\$

Gives clutter a home off the floor.

Cost: FREE • \$ under \$25 • \$\$ \$25–\$100 • \$\$\$ over \$100

What to say and follow-up on the next page →

10

Rugs, Cords and Clutter

continued

3

WHAT TO SAY

Short, calm cues they can follow

say
this

"Let's find a new home for this."
"Help me pick up these shoes."
"Let's keep this path clear."

+

YOUR SHOPPING LIST

ITEM	WHY IT HELPS	COST
☐ Cord covers	No cords in walkways	\$
☐ Rug tape or rubber backing	Stops sliding	\$
☐ Storage baskets	Clutter off the floor	\$

4

FOLLOW UP

CHECK AGAIN EVERY WEEK

Do a 2-minute floor sweep each Sunday. Walk their routes looking only at the floor.

CALL A PRO IF

They trip often even with a clear floor. Ask about balance and foot problems.

Dr. Vera's tip

Take a phone video walking through the house at knee height. Hazards jump out on the screen.



Entryways, Porches and Outdoors

DO THIS MONTH

THE RISK

Tripping on thresholds, uneven sidewalks, wet leaves, ice or porch steps.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Outdoor surfaces change with weather, and entryways often have steps with no rail.

1 QUICK CHECK Is this a problem at your house?

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Outside steps have no handrail. | ☐ Leaves, snow or ice build up. |
| ☐ The porch or entry is dark at night. | ☐ There's a raised threshold at the door. |
| ☐ Walkways are cracked or uneven. | ☐ They walk outside alone in bad weather. |

Checked 2 or more? Start the action plan below.

2 ACTION PLAN Do these in order

1 Add a handrail at every outside step.

Entryways are high-risk spots.

\$\$

2 Install motion-sensor lights at the entrances.

Light comes on before the first step.

\$\$

3 Fix cracks and add threshold ramps.

Smooth transitions prevent tripping.

\$\$

4 Keep walkways clear of leaves, snow and ice.

Salt or sand icy spots right away.

\$

Cost: **FREE** · \$ under \$25 · \$\$ \$25–\$100 · \$\$\$ over \$100

What to say and follow-up on the next page →

11 Entryways, Porches and Outdoors

continued

3 WHAT TO SAY Short, calm cues they can follow

say
this

"Let's go slow here."
"Hold the rail."
"Step up now."

+ YOUR SHOPPING LIST

ITEM	WHY IT HELPS	COST
☐ Outdoor handrail	Support at the steps	\$\$
☐ Motion-sensor lights	Light at night	\$\$
☐ Threshold ramp	No tripping at the door	\$\$
☐ Bench by the door	Sit for shoes and bags	\$\$

4 FOLLOW UP

CHECK AGAIN EACH SEASON

Walk the entry in each season. Look for ice, leaves, loose steps and dark spots.

CALL A PRO IF

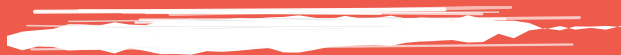
They've fallen outside. Ask about walking aids and balance therapy.

Dr. Vera's tip

Put a small bench by the front door. Sitting to take shoes on and off prevents a lot of falls.

part three

Everyday Moves



Standing, sitting, walking and getting in the car: the moments when falls happen.

In this part

12	Refusing the Walker or Cane	p. 36
13	Shoes, Socks and Slippers	p. 38
14	Getting In and Out of a Chair	p. 40
15	Getting In and Out of the Car	p. 42
16	Rushing and Hurrying	p. 44
17	Climbing on Chairs, Stools and Ladders	p. 46

Remember S.T.E.P.

Scan the home • **T**iming & toileting • **E**quipment • **P**hysical health

12

Refusing the Walker or Cane

DO THIS NOW

THE RISK

Leaving the walker behind, carrying it instead of using it, or refusing it outright.

WHY IT HAPPENS

They may forget they need it, see it as a sign of weakness, or find it awkward.

1 QUICK CHECK Is this a problem at your house?

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ They leave the walker in another room. | ☐ The walker was never fitted by a therapist. |
| ☐ They carry the walker instead of using it. | ☐ Walkways are too narrow for the walker. |
| ☐ They say they 'don't need it.' | ☐ They've fallen without it. |

Checked 2 or more? Start the action plan below.

2 ACTION PLAN Do these in order

1

Put the walker right beside their chair and bed every time.

Make it the easiest thing to grab.

FREE

2

Ask a PT or OT to fit and train them on it.

The wrong height makes walking harder.

\$

3

Get a second walker for another floor or room.

It's always within reach.

\$\$

4

Hand it to them with a simple cue.

'Here's your walker. Let's go together.'

FREE

Cost: FREE • \$ under \$25 • \$\$ \$25–\$100 • \$\$\$ over \$100

What to say and follow-up on the next page →

12

Refusing the Walker or Cane

continued

3

WHAT TO SAY

Short, calm cues they can follow

say
this

"Here you go."

"Hands on the handles."

"This makes it easier to walk."

+

YOUR SHOPPING LIST

ITEM	WHY IT HELPS	COST
☐ Fitted walker or rollator	Right height, right support	\$\$
☐ Walker basket or bag	Hands free for the handles	\$
☐ Second walker	One in every main area	\$\$

4

FOLLOW UP

CHECK AGAIN IN 1 WEEK

Count how many times they walk without it. Is the number going down?

CALL A PRO IF

They can't use the walker safely or keep falling. Ask for a PT or OT evaluation.

Dr. Vera's tip

Two walkers, one upstairs and one downstairs, or one for the bedroom.
It's always within reach.

13

Shoes, Socks and Slippers

DO THIS NOW

THE RISK

Walking in socks, loose slippers, backless shoes or bare feet.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Poor footwear causes slipping and tripping, especially on smooth floors.

1 QUICK CHECK Is this a problem at your house?

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ They walk in socks or bare feet. | ☐ Laces come untied. |
| ☐ Their slippers have no backs. | ☐ They have foot pain, sores or swelling. |
| ☐ Shoes are worn or loose. | ☐ Shoes are hard to put on, so they skip them. |

Checked 2 or more? Start the action plan below.

2 ACTION PLAN Do these in order

1

Buy closed-back shoes with non-slip soles.

Two pairs of the same kind make it easy.

\$\$

2

Choose Velcro instead of laces.

Easy on, no tripping on laces.

\$\$

3

Keep shoes by the bed and their favorite chair.

Shoes should be the first thing they reach.

FREE

4

Use grip socks at night.

Safer than plain socks if they get up.

\$

Cost: FREE • \$ under \$25 • \$\$ \$25–\$100 • \$\$\$ over \$100

What to say and follow-up on the next page →

13

Shoes, Socks and Slippers

continued

3

WHAT TO SAY

Short, calm cues they can follow

say
this

"These look great on you."
"Let's get your shoes before we walk."
"Sit down and I'll help with your shoes."

+

YOUR SHOPPING LIST

ITEM	WHY IT HELPS	COST
☐ Closed-back, non-slip shoes	Grip and support	\$\$
☐ Closed-back slippers	Safe at home	\$\$
☐ Grip socks	Night trips	\$

4

FOLLOW UP

CHECK AGAIN IN 2 WEEKS

Check their feet and shoes. Are the soles still gripping, and are there any sores?

CALL A PRO IF

They have foot pain, swelling or sores. A podiatrist can help.

Dr. Vera's tip

Replace their favorite slippers with a closed-back slipper in the same color. Familiar, but safe.



Getting In and Out of a Chair

DO THIS MONTH

THE RISK

Plopping down hard, missing the seat, or rocking and pushing to get up from a soft couch.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Low, deep, soft seats make standing hard. Dementia can also make it hard to judge where the seat is.

1 QUICK CHECK Is this a problem at your house?

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Their favorite seat is a low, soft couch. | ☐ Chairs have no arms. |
| ☐ They plop down hard when sitting. | ☐ They sit before reaching the chair. |
| ☐ They rock or push several times to stand. | ☐ Chairs roll or swivel. |

Checked 2 or more? Start the action plan below.

2 ACTION PLAN Do these in order

1

Pick one sturdy chair with arms in each main room.

Firm seat, solid arms, no wheels.

FREE

2

Raise low seats with a firm cushion or furniture risers.

Higher seats make standing easier.

\$

3

Teach 'back up until you feel it, reach back, sit slowly.'

Feeling the chair prevents missing it.

FREE

4

Ask about a lift chair if standing is very hard.

It gently helps them rise.

\$\$\$

Cost: FREE • \$ under \$25 • \$\$ \$25–\$100 • \$\$\$ over \$100

What to say and follow-up on the next page →

14

Getting In and Out of a Chair

continued

3

WHAT TO SAY

Short, calm cues they can follow

say
this

"Feel the chair behind your legs?"

"Reach back for both arms of the chair."

"Now sit down nice and slow."

+

YOUR SHOPPING LIST

ITEM	WHY IT HELPS	COST
☐ Firm seat cushion	Raises the seat	\$
☐ Furniture risers	Higher couch or chair	\$
☐ Lift chair	Helps them stand	\$\$\$

4

FOLLOW UP

CHECK AGAIN IN 2 WEEKS

Watch them sit and stand. Are they using the arms and moving slowly?

CALL A PRO IF

They can't stand up without a lot of help, or they're falling while sitting down. Ask for a PT or OT evaluation.

Dr. Vera's tip

Put a bright pillow on the safe chair. It's easy to spot, and everyone in the family knows which seat to guide them to.

15

Getting In and Out of the Car

DO THIS MONTH

THE RISK

Stepping in one leg first, hitting their head, getting stuck halfway, or struggling to get out.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Getting into a car means bending, twisting and balancing on one leg in a tight space.

1 QUICK CHECK Is this a problem at your house?

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ They step in one leg first. | ☐ Getting out takes several tries. |
| ☐ They hit their head getting in. | ☐ You park near curbs or on slopes. |
| ☐ They grab the car door for support. | ☐ They get rushed in bad weather. |

Checked 2 or more? Start the action plan below.

2 ACTION PLAN Do these in order

1

Slide the seat all the way back and recline slightly.

More room makes turning easier.

FREE

2

Teach 'back up, sit, then swing your legs in.'

No twisting on one leg.

FREE

3

Use a portable car handle in the door frame.

A safe handle instead of the door.

\$

4

Put a swivel cushion or plastic bag on the seat.

Helps them turn. Remove the bag before driving.

\$

Cost: FREE • \$ under \$25 • \$\$ \$25–\$100 • \$\$\$ over \$100

What to say and follow-up on the next page →

15

Getting In and Out of the Car

continued

3

WHAT TO SAY

Short, calm cues they can follow

say
this

"Hand on the handle, now sit down."

"Watch your head."

"Now bring your legs in, one at a time."

+

YOUR SHOPPING LIST

ITEM	WHY IT HELPS	COST
☐ Portable car handle	Safe grip	\$
☐ Swivel seat cushion	Easy turning	\$
☐ Umbrella that stays in the car	No rushing in rain	\$

4

FOLLOW UP

CHECK AGAIN AFTER 3 TRIPS

Are they sitting first and using the handle every time?

CALL A PRO IF

They can't get in or out of the car safely, or have fallen doing it. An OT can teach a safer technique.

Dr. Vera's tip

A plastic grocery bag on the seat helps them swivel in easily. Take it out before you drive so they don't slide.



Rushing and Hurrying

DO THIS NOW

THE RISK

Rushing to answer the phone or door, hurrying to the bathroom, or speeding up to keep pace with you.

WHY IT HAPPENS

When people rush, they stop paying attention to their feet and balance. Dementia makes it harder to slow down.

1 QUICK CHECK Is this a problem at your house?

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ They rush to answer the phone or door. | ☐ Mornings are rushed. |
| ☐ They hurry to the bathroom. | ☐ Appointments are scheduled tightly. |
| ☐ They speed up to keep pace with you. | ☐ Falls or near-misses happen when hurrying. |

Checked 2 or more? Start the action plan below.

2 ACTION PLAN Do these in order

1

Put a phone next to their favorite chair.

No more running to answer.

\$

2

Add a doorbell camera or intercom.

No one needs to rush to the door.

\$\$

3

Start getting ready 30 minutes earlier.

Time is the best fall prevention.

FREE

4

Walk at their pace, not yours.

Your pace sets theirs.

FREE

Cost: FREE • \$ under \$25 • \$\$ \$25–\$100 • \$\$\$ over \$100

What to say and follow-up on the next page →

16

Rushing and Hurrying

continued

3

WHAT TO SAY

Short, calm cues they can follow

say
this

"No rush at all."
"We have plenty of time."
"Let's walk together at your speed."

+

YOUR SHOPPING LIST

ITEM	WHY IT HELPS	COST
☐ Cordless phone by the chair	No rushing to answer	\$\$
☐ Doorbell camera	See who's there	\$\$
☐ Large wall clock and schedule	Fewer surprises	\$

4

FOLLOW UP

CHECK AGAIN IN 2 WEEKS

Notice when they rush. Is it the phone, the door, the bathroom or you?

CALL A PRO IF

They're falling while hurrying, or seem unable to slow down. Ask about balance and bladder problems.

Dr. Vera's tip

Tell them, 'The phone will call back.' Say it every time until it becomes a family saying.



Climbing on Chairs, Stools and Ladders

DO THIS NOW

THE RISK

Standing on chairs to change a bulb, climbing a step stool to reach a shelf, or getting on the ladder in the garage.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Old habits and pride stay strong long after balance and judgment fade.

1 QUICK CHECK Is this a problem at your house?

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ There's a step stool or ladder in the house. | ☐ Everyday items are stored up high. |
| ☐ They climb on chairs to reach things. | ☐ The garage or shed has a ladder they can reach. |
| ☐ They change light bulbs themselves. | ☐ They insist on doing 'handyman' jobs. |

Checked 2 or more? Start the action plan below.

2 ACTION PLAN Do these in order

1

Remove step stools and lock up ladders.

If it's in the house, it gets used.

FREE

2

Move everything they use to waist or shoulder height.

No reaching, no climbing.

FREE

3

Switch to long-life LED bulbs.

One less reason to climb.

\$

4

Give them a safe ground-level job instead.

Sorting tools, sanding or folding keeps them useful.

FREE

Cost: **FREE** • \$ under \$25 • \$\$ \$25–\$100 • \$\$\$ over \$100

What to say and follow-up on the next page →

17

Climbing on Chairs, Stools and Ladders

continued

3

WHAT TO SAY

Short, calm cues they can follow

say
this

"I'll grab it. Can you hold this for me?"
"Let's find a better spot for this."
"Could you help me with this down here?"

+

YOUR SHOPPING LIST

ITEM	WHY IT HELPS	COST
☐ LED bulbs	Last for years	\$
☐ Lock for ladder or garage	No climbing	\$
☐ Reacher/grabber tool	Reach without climbing	\$

4

FOLLOW UP

CHECK AGAIN IN 1 MONTH

Look for chairs moved under shelves or signs of climbing.

CALL A PRO IF

They keep climbing even after you make changes, or seem unaware of the danger.

Dr. Vera's tip

Switch every bulb in the house to LED. It's one afternoon of work and removes one of the top reasons to climb.

part four

Day and Night



Nighttime trips, restlessness, urgency and dehydration.

In this part

- | | | |
|-----------|-----------------------------------|-------|
| 18 | Nighttime Trips to the Bathroom | p. 50 |
| 19 | Restless Pacing and Walking | p. 52 |
| 20 | Rushing to the Bathroom (Urgency) | p. 54 |
| 21 | Dehydration and Skipped Meals | p. 56 |
-

Remember S.T.E.P.

Scan the home • **T**iming & toileting • **E**quipment • **P**hysical health

18

Nighttime Trips to the Bathroom

DO THIS NOW

THE RISK

Getting up at night half-asleep, dizzy and unsteady, and walking to the bathroom in the dark.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Sleepiness, blood pressure drops, a full bladder and darkness all hit at once at night.

1

QUICK CHECK Is this a problem at your house?

☐ They get up at night to use the bathroom.

☐ They walk barefoot or in socks at night.

☐ The route to the bathroom is dark.

☐ The bathroom is far from the bed.

☐ They feel dizzy or sleepy when getting up.

☐ They've fallen at night before.

Checked 2 or more? Start the action plan below.

2 ACTION PLAN Do these in order

- 1

Put motion-sensor lights from bed to toilet.
Light comes on with the first step.

\$
- 2

Add a bedside commode.
Fewer steps in the dark.

\$\$
- 3

Cut drinks 2 hours before bed, not during the day.
Fewer night trips, no dehydration.

FREE
- 4

Keep grip socks and the walker right by the bed.
Ready before they stand.

\$

Cost: FREE • \$ under \$25 • \$\$ \$25–\$100 • \$\$\$ over \$100

What to say and follow-up on the next page →

18

Nighttime Trips to the Bathroom

continued

3

WHAT TO SAY

Short, calm cues they can follow

say
this

"Let me turn on the light for you."

"Sit first, count to 10, then stand."

"I'm right here. Take your time."

+

YOUR SHOPPING LIST

ITEM	WHY IT HELPS	COST
☐ Motion-sensor night lights	Lit path	\$
☐ Bedside commode	Fewer steps	\$\$
☐ Bed alarm	Know when they're up	\$\$

4

FOLLOW UP

CHECK AGAIN IN 1 WEEK

Count night bathroom trips for a week. If there are many, ask the doctor why.

CALL A PRO IF

They're getting up many times a night, or it's new. Ask about bladder problems, diuretic timing and infection.

Dr. Vera's tip

Put the commode right next to the bed and the walker right in front of it. The fewest steps is the safest route.



Restless Pacing and Walking

DO THIS MONTH

THE RISK

Walking back and forth for long stretches, getting up again and again, unable to sit still.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Restless energy, boredom, pain, hunger or a need for the bathroom. Some medications also cause restlessness.

1 QUICK CHECK Is this a problem at your house?

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ They walk back and forth for long periods. | ☐ There's nowhere to rest along the way. |
| ☐ They get up again and again. | ☐ Pacing is worse in the afternoon. |
| ☐ Walking paths are cluttered. | ☐ They seem tired but can't sit still. |

Checked 2 or more? Start the action plan below.

2 ACTION PLAN Do these in order

1

Clear a safe walking loop through the house.

At least 3 feet wide, with no rugs or cords.

FREE

2

Put chairs along the loop for rest stops.

Tired legs fall; rested legs don't.

FREE

3

Check pain, hunger, thirst and bathroom needs.

Pacing often signals an unmet need.

FREE

4

Plan a daily walk outside.

Burns restless energy safely.

FREE

Cost: FREE • \$ under \$25 • \$\$ \$25–\$100 • \$\$\$ over \$100

What to say and follow-up on the next page →

19

Restless Pacing and Walking

continued

3

WHAT TO SAY

Short, calm cues they can follow

say
this

- "Let's walk together."
- "Do you need the bathroom?"
- "Let's get a snack and sit a minute."

+

YOUR SHOPPING LIST

ITEM	WHY IT HELPS	COST
☐ Supportive shoes	Grip for long walks	\$\$
☐ Chairs along the route	Rest stops	FREE
☐ Activity box	Something for busy hands	\$

4

FOLLOW UP

CHECK AGAIN IN 2 WEEKS

Note what time pacing starts. Plan a walk or activity just before that time.

CALL A PRO IF

Pacing is new, constant, or they look like they're in pain. Ask about medication side effects too.

Dr. Vera's tip

Put a chair every few steps along their walking loop. Tired legs fall; rested legs don't.

20

Rushing to the Bathroom (Urgency)

DO THIS NOW

THE RISK

Hurrying to the toilet, fumbling with clothes, slipping on the way, or having accidents.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Bladder changes, waiting too long and hard-to-open clothing combine into a dangerous rush.

1 QUICK CHECK Is this a problem at your house?

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ They hurry to reach the toilet. | ☐ They wait until the last minute. |
| ☐ They fumble with belts or buttons. | ☐ They get up often at night. |
| ☐ They have accidents on the way. | ☐ They've slipped on the way to the bathroom. |

Checked 2 or more? Start the action plan below.

2 ACTION PLAN Do these in order

1

Set a bathroom schedule every 2 to 3 hours.

Going before the urge stops the rush.

FREE

2

Switch to elastic waists and easy-open clothes.

Faster undressing, fewer accidents.

\$\$

3

Keep the path to the toilet clear and lit.

No obstacles when they hurry.

\$

4

Ask the doctor about bladder causes.

Infections and some medicines cause urgency.

FREE

Cost: FREE • \$ under \$25 • \$\$ \$25–\$100 • \$\$\$ over \$100

What to say and follow-up on the next page →

20

Rushing to the Bathroom (Urgency)

continued

3

WHAT TO SAY

Short, calm cues they can follow

say
this

"Let's use the bathroom first."

"No problem, take your time."

"I'm right here with you."

+

YOUR SHOPPING LIST

ITEM	WHY IT HELPS	COST
☐ Elastic-waist pants	Quick to pull down	\$\$
☐ Absorbent underwear	Less panic about accidents	\$\$
☐ Bathroom door sign	Easy to find	\$

4

FOLLOW UP

CHECK AGAIN IN 2 WEEKS

Are there fewer accidents and less hurrying with the schedule?

CALL A PRO IF

Urgency is new, or comes with burning, fever or new confusion. It could be a urinary tract infection.

Dr. Vera's tip

Set a phone alarm every two hours that says 'Bathroom break.' It prevents both falls and accidents.

21

Dehydration and Skipped Meals

DO THIS NOW

THE RISK

Dizzy, weak, shaky or more confused; not drinking or eating enough during the day.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Thirst fades with age and dementia. Dehydration and low blood sugar both cause dizziness and falls.

1 QUICK CHECK Is this a problem at your house?

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ They rarely drink unless you remind them. | ☐ They feel dizzy or weak. |
| ☐ Their urine is dark. | ☐ They drink a lot of coffee or soda. |
| ☐ They skip meals or eat very little. | ☐ Confusion gets worse in the afternoon. |

Checked 2 or more? Start the action plan below.

2 ACTION PLAN Do these in order

1

Offer a drink every hour.

Don't wait for thirst.

FREE

2

Serve small, frequent meals and snacks.

Steady energy prevents weakness.

FREE

3

Keep a filled water bottle where they sit.

Seeing it reminds them to drink.

\$

4

Offer water-rich foods: soup, fruit, yogurt.

Food counts toward fluids.

FREE

Cost: FREE • \$ under \$25 • \$\$ \$25–\$100 • \$\$\$ over \$100

What to say and follow-up on the next page →

21

Dehydration and Skipped Meals

continued

3

WHAT TO SAY

Short, calm cues they can follow

say
this

"Try this juice with me."

"Let's have a little snack."

"Here's your favorite cup."

+

YOUR SHOPPING LIST

ITEM	WHY IT HELPS	COST
☐ Colorful water bottle	Easy to track	\$
☐ Easy snacks	Steady energy	\$
☐ Cup with handles	Easy to hold	\$

4

FOLLOW UP

CHECK AGAIN DAILY

Check the water bottle at dinner. How much did they drink today?

CALL A PRO IF

Dark urine, dry mouth, dizziness, weakness or new confusion. Dehydration can become serious quickly.

Dr. Vera's tip

Fill a colorful water bottle each morning and put it where they sit. By dinner, you'll know exactly how much they drank.

part five

When a Fall Happens



What to do after a fall, and how to protect yourself too.

In this part

- | | | |
|-----------|---|-------|
| 22 | After a Fall: Helping Them Up Safely | p. 60 |
| 23 | Fear of Falling | p. 62 |
| 24 | Hip Protectors, Alarms and Fall Alert Devices | p. 64 |
| 25 | Protecting Your Back as a Caregiver | p. 66 |
-

Remember S.T.E.P.

Scan the home • **T**iming & toileting • **E**quipment • **P**hysical health



After a Fall: Helping Them Up Safely

DO THIS NOW

THE RISK

They're on the floor, scared, possibly hurt, and you want to get them up right away.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Pulling someone up quickly can worsen an injury, and lifting wrong is how caregivers hurt their backs.

1 QUICK CHECK Is this a problem at your house?

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ They've fallen before. | ☐ They take blood thinners. |
| ☐ You don't know how to help them up safely. | ☐ You're alone with them most of the time. |
| ☐ You've pulled them up by the arms. | ☐ There's no plan for getting help at night. |

Checked 2 or more? Start the action plan below.

2 ACTION PLAN Do these in order

1 Stop and check for injuries before moving them.

Head, hips, wrists, bleeding, pain, new confusion.

FREE

2 If safe, guide them: roll, hands and knees, then up into a sturdy chair.

Let them use their own strength.

FREE

3 Call for a 'lift assist' if you can't safely help.

Use the non-emergency line, or 911 if unsure.

FREE

4 Write down what happened and tell the doctor.

Every fall is a clue to prevent the next.

FREE

Cost: **FREE** • \$ under \$25 • \$\$ \$25–\$100 • \$\$\$ over \$100

What to say and follow-up on the next page →

22

After a Fall: Helping Them Up Safely

continued

3

WHAT TO SAY

Short, calm cues they can follow

say
this

"Does anything hurt? Show me where."

"Let's roll onto your side together."

"Put your hands on the chair and push."

+

YOUR SHOPPING LIST

ITEM	WHY IT HELPS	COST
☐ Fall alert device with auto-detection	Help comes faster	\$\$
☐ Sturdy chair in each room	Something to push up on	FREE
☐ Emergency numbers by every phone	No searching in a crisis	FREE

4

FOLLOW UP

CHECK AGAIN AFTER EVERY FALL

Fill in the fall log at the back of this book. What were they doing, and what can you change?

CALL A PRO IF

They hit their head, take blood thinners, can't get up, have pain or new confusion. Call 911 if it's serious.

Dr. Vera's tip

If you can't get them up safely, call your local non-emergency number and ask for a 'lift assist.' It's what they're there for.

23

Fear of Falling

DO THIS MONTH

THE RISK

Afraid to walk, clinging to walls and furniture, refusing to move, or asking to stay in bed.

WHY IT HAPPENS

After a fall or near-miss, fear can take over. Less walking leads to weaker legs and even more falls.

1 QUICK CHECK Is this a problem at your house?

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ They're afraid to walk since a fall. | ☐ They've stopped going outside. |
| ☐ They cling to walls and furniture. | ☐ Their legs are getting weaker. |
| ☐ They ask to stay in bed or in the chair. | ☐ They get anxious when you ask them to walk. |

Checked 2 or more? Start the action plan below.

2 ACTION PLAN Do these in order

1

Start with very short, supported walks.

Kitchen and back is a win.

FREE

2

Ask for PT or OT to rebuild confidence.

Therapists are experts at this.

\$

3

Use a fitted walker for extra security.

Support makes walking feel safer.

\$\$

4

Praise every walk out loud.

Confidence grows with encouragement.

FREE

Cost: FREE · \$ under \$25 · \$\$ \$25–\$100 · \$\$\$ over \$100

What to say and follow-up on the next page →

23

Fear of Falling

continued

3

WHAT TO SAY

Short, calm cues they can follow

say
this

"Hold my arm. We'll go together."

"Just to the kitchen and back."

"You did great! Look how far you walked."

+

YOUR SHOPPING LIST

ITEM	WHY IT HELPS	COST
☐ Fitted walker	Feels safer	\$\$
☐ Grab bars on main routes	Support where they walk most	\$\$
☐ Fall alert device	Peace of mind	\$\$

4

FOLLOW UP

CHECK AGAIN EVERY WEEK

Track how far they walk each day. Is the distance slowly growing?

CALL A PRO IF

Fear keeps them from moving, or they're losing strength fast. Ask about a PT or OT referral.

Dr. Vera's tip

Celebrate every walk out loud. Confidence comes back one step and one 'Great job!' at a time.



Hip Protectors, Alarms and Fall Alert Devices

DO THIS MONTH

THE RISK

You worry about falls when you're asleep, in another room or away from home.

WHY IT HAPPENS

You can't watch every minute. The right tools reduce injuries and get help there faster.

1 QUICK CHECK Is this a problem at your house?

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ You worry when you're asleep or out. | ☐ They get up at night without calling you. |
| ☐ They live alone part of the day. | ☐ They've had a hip or wrist injury before. |
| ☐ They wouldn't remember to press a help button. | ☐ You don't have any fall alert system. |

Checked 2 or more? Start the action plan below.

2 ACTION PLAN Do these in order

1 Choose a device with automatic fall detection.

Many people with dementia forget to press a button.

\$\$

2 Add bed or chair alarms.

Alerts you the moment they get up.

\$\$

3 Try comfortable hip protectors.

They can soften a fall onto the hip.

\$\$

4 Test every device and put charging on the daily routine.

A dead device can't help.

FREE

Cost: FREE • \$ under \$25 • \$\$ \$25–\$100 • \$\$\$ over \$100

What to say and follow-up on the next page →

24

Hip Protectors, Alarms and Fall Alert Devices

continued

3

WHAT TO SAY

Short, calm cues they can follow

say
this

"These are your special comfy shorts."

"This watch keeps you safe."

"We're doing this so you can stay at home."

+

YOUR SHOPPING LIST

ITEM	WHY IT HELPS	COST
☐ Fall detection watch or pendant	Automatic alerts	\$\$
☐ Bed or chair alarm	Know when they're up	\$\$
☐ Hip protectors	Protect the hip	\$\$

4

FOLLOW UP

CHECK AGAIN EVERY MONTH

Test each device. Does it alert you, and do you get the message fast?

CALL A PRO IF

They fall often even with these tools. Ask about more help at home or other care options.

Dr. Vera's tip

Ask for a device with automatic fall detection. A button they can't remember to press won't help.

25

Protecting Your Back as a Caregiver

DO THIS MONTH

THE RISK

Lifting, pulling, twisting, catching falls, and waking up with back or shoulder pain.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Caregivers often get hurt helping someone stand, transfer or recover from a fall.

1 QUICK CHECK Is this a problem at your house?

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ You lift or pull them up by the arms. | ☐ You twist while helping them move. |
| ☐ You've tried to catch them falling. | ☐ You do hard transfers alone. |
| ☐ You have back, neck or shoulder pain. | ☐ No one has shown you safe techniques. |

Checked 2 or more? Start the action plan below.

2 ACTION PLAN Do these in order

1

Ask an OT to teach you safe transfers.

A single session can protect your back for years.

\$

2

Use a gait belt for standing and walking.

A safe grip that protects their shoulders.

\$

3

Count together: 'On three, we stand.'

They use their own strength.

FREE

4

Never catch a fall; guide them down.

Protects you both.

FREE

Cost: **FREE** • \$ under \$25 • \$\$ \$25–\$100 • \$\$\$ over \$100

What to say and follow-up on the next page →

25

Protecting Your Back as a Caregiver

continued

3

WHAT TO SAY

Short, calm cues they can follow

say
this

"Ready? One, two, three, stand."

"Push with your legs."

"Let's do this together."

+

YOUR SHOPPING LIST

ITEM	WHY IT HELPS	COST
☐ Gait belt	Safe grip	\$
☐ Transfer board	Easier bed-to-chair moves	\$\$
☐ Standing aid	Support for hard transfers	\$\$\$

4

FOLLOW UP

CHECK AGAIN IN 1 MONTH

Notice your own body. Is your back pain getting better or worse?

CALL A PRO IF

You have back, neck or shoulder pain. See your own doctor. Your health matters too.

Dr. Vera's tip

Don't try to catch a fall. Guide them gently down to the floor. It protects both of you.

Fall & near-miss log

Write down every fall and every near-miss. Patterns show where and when the risk is highest.

Date & time	Where?	What were they doing?	Injury?	What we changed

Tip: near-misses are warnings. Fix the cause before it becomes a fall.

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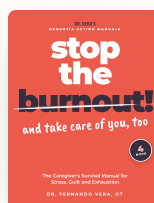
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BOOK 3
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about the author

Dr. Fernando Vera, OT



Dr. Fernando Vera is a licensed occupational therapist and the owner and clinical director of Empower Health, a clinic specializing in dementia care. He and his team help families find support, reduce caregiver burnout and unlock benefits most never discover, including enrollment in Medicare's GUIDE Program for people living with dementia.

His work is personal. His mother, Virginia, was healthy and active when she was diagnosed with Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, a rapidly progressing form of dementia. Caring for her taught him what no textbook could: caregivers need clear, practical answers they can use in the moment.

He is also the creator of the Dementia Behavior Coach app, The Activity Idea Book and The Sundown Plan.

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