PREVENTION OF ACCIDENTS IN ELDERLY

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When growing old, the physical ability of elderly people gradually wanes, making them prone to accidents.

It may result in injury, hospitalization, or even loss of self-care ability owing to disability.
Improved living standards, better healthcare, greater awareness of the importance of a healthy diet and taking regular exercise have led to more and more people enjoying life into their 80s and 90s.

However older people, in particular the frail elderly, are one of the groups of our population most vulnerable to accidents, particularly in and around the home.
The most serious accidents involving older people usually happen on the stairs or in the kitchen.

The bedroom and the living room are the most common locations for accidents in general.
1. FALL

Cause:
Environmental factors, gait instability, impaired vision, etc.
Prevention:

- Keep floors free of obstructions.
- Ensure adequate lighting in household area.
- Avoid stepping on foldable chair.
- Keep floor dry.
- Constantly check floor surface for any wear and tear.
- Avoid standing on “step” next to windows when posting out bamboo to sun dry clothing.
Place non-slippery mattress on the floor of bathroom.
Exercise regularly to strengthen gait and power.
Ensure a balanced gait during walking. Walk slowly. If necessary, use walking aids.
Ensure that the length of clothing is not too long.
Use suitable corrective lens to ensure a good vision.
2. CHOKING

Cause:
Talk or laugh when eating; size or texture of food not suitable for elderly etc.
Prevention

- Do not talk or laugh during chewing or swallowing food.
- Ensure the set of denture is in its fixed position and not loose.
- Be more cautious when taking soft and sticky food.
- Before a meal, chop food into small pieces.
- During a meal, chew thoroughly before swallowing.
3. ACCIDENTAL POISONING/DRUG OVERDOSE

Cause:

- Inadequate knowledge about drugs, non-compliance to prescription, taking other person’s drugs etc.
Precaution:

- Never buy or use over-the-counter drugs. Consult doctor when feeling sick.
- Never take other person’s drugs.
- Before taking drug, check carefully it is the right drug, taken at the right time, through the right route and at the right dosage.
- Never place different drugs into the same container. Empty containers should be disposed off and not to use to store other drugs.
4. BURN AND SCALD

Cause: Carelessness, general disregard of safety, etc.

Prevention:

- While cooking, pay extra attention to the stove fire and the cooking utensil. Turn the pan handle away from the front and close to the wall.
- When opening the lid of a cooking utensil, take extra care to the steam.
Be careful when handling boiling oil, hot water or soup.

If need to hold hot materials, use insulated gloves.

Ensure all food and drink is at a reasonable temperature before eating or drinking.

All hot objects including an iron or containers with hot matter must not be placed near the margin of a table or desk.
- Test the temperature of water before bathing.
- Take extra care when using an electric heater in winter time.
- Do not burn charcoal or light fire to keep warmth at home.
- Due to certain diseases, e.g. stroke, diabetes etc., skin senses would be much reduced. Take extra care when touching hot objects.
5. FIRE-RELATED ACCIDENTS

- The elderly are more at risk from fire due to a poor sense of smell, restricted or slow mobility.

- Major sources of ignition include cookers, materials, candles, coal fires, heaters and electric blankets.
Prevention

- Take care with smoking materials and try to avoid smoking in bed
- Fit a fireguard
- Fit a smoke alarm preferably main-operated or one with a ten-year battery
- Do not dry clothes on fireguards or heaters.
Hypothermia occurs when the body temperature drops to 35°C. It is the main contributing factor in cause of death for more than 400 people in the over-65 age group each year.
Prevention

- Natural fibers like wool are warmer than synthetic fabrics
- Eat regular meals and take hot drinks during the day
- Move about at regular intervals.
CONCLUSION

- Accident could not be completely avoided, but its occurrence could be prevented.
- For the elderly, effective prevention could much reduce the occurrence of accident, thus alleviating the adverse effect on their physiological and psychological health, and also enhancing their self-care ability, leading to a healthy life.
THANKS