

## Fall Prevention Tip of the Month

August 2010



### Understand Your Medications

Understanding your medications and taking them as directed can help you stay independent. Some medications can increase your risk of falling because they cause side effects such as dizziness, lightheadedness, sleepiness, insomnia (lack of sleep), drop in blood pressure, or confusion. The health problems for which you take the medications may also contribute to the risk of falls. The more medications you take, the more likely they may interact badly and increase your risk of a fall.

- Check with your doctor(s) or pharmacist about the side effects of your medications and over-the-counter drugs. Some medications might affect your coordination or balance, or cause dizziness, confusion, or sleepiness. Some medications don't work well together, adding to your risk of falls.
- Bring your prescribed and over-the-counter medicines with you when you visit the doctor or pharmacist. Also bring any vitamins, minerals, and herbal products you are taking.
- Make sure all medications are clearly labeled and stored in a well-lit area according to instructions.
- Take medications on schedule with a full glass of water, unless otherwise instructed.
- Limit your alcohol use and do not smoke.
- Check with your doctor if you think your medications are causing dizziness or unsteadiness. Your doctor can tell you which drugs, including over-the-counter medicines, might cause problems.
- Talk to your doctor before you change or stop taking your medications. Do not change or stop them on your own.

