

Medical Evaluation of Falls

Causes of Falls Falls are no accident. As you get older, changes in your senses, reflexes, and strength affect your walking and balance. These changes, due to aging and chronic disease, can cause you to fall from things that would have only caused a stumble when you were young. Also, diseases of your heart and brain can cause “spells” that make you fall.

The Importance of a Medical Evaluation Your health care provider can help you prevent falls and injuries from falls. Getting the whole story of your falls and the conditions that can affect your balance is the first step. Then, with just a simple physical, your primary care physician, nurse practitioner, or nurse can look for diseases causing changes in your body that can be treated to reduce your fall risk. Your health care providers will review your medications to detect those that may be making you less steady on your feet, or recommend equipment such as canes and walkers. Your team will recommend therapy and exercise that will build your strength and balance.

Falls are no accident. The majority of falls can be predicted and prevented. Tell your health care provider if you fall so that you can begin to use preventive strategies that will help you to maintain your independence.

(Adapted with permission from the Practicing Physician Education Project 2006)