Getting Up From a Fall

From the Northern Virginia Fall Prevention Coalition, by Bradley Ann Morgan, Walks Beside Coaching & Consulting

From hospital statistics, falls and their related complications report that 12 percent of those recorded from emergency rooms resulted in death. Additionally, two-thirds of those who fell and survived fell again within six months, returning for medical treatment. Both therapists and family members are concerned that teaching fall recovery skills is extremely important. However, getting up from a fall is often left to the family, often not addressed at the time of discharge.

Getting up from a fall or termed here as fall recovery, training can be taught through a sequential method or through backward-chaining. Let’s explain both of those here. Sequential teaching requires the person to begin on the floor lying in a supine position, preferably with a mat to cushion the joints. A nearby chair may also be used for support. Once lying supine, the sequence of steps is:

- The person rolls onto left (or right) side and uses a free arm to push up into a side sitting position. The free hand is placed next to the extended arm and the individual pushes up on both hands, turning their trunk until they are kneeling on all fours.
- Bring the left or right leg through the front of the body to place foot squarely on the floor to have a half-kneeling position. Continue to push up to a standing position using both arms and the firm footing or by pushing up with both hands on the closest chair.

The Backward-Chaining method requires the person to begin in a sitting or standing position. The steps here allow for strengthening the arms and legs in a progressive process. In the event the person falls, they can repeat these steps as a learned skill. Follow or help your loved one with these steps:

- The person sits in a chair and turns slightly to one side, sliding one knee over the edge until it is resting and bearing weight on a support. The person then pushes back up onto the chair. To continue the strengthening, the person repeats the chair position, but continues down to assume a half kneeling position with a support cushion or wedge, and then progresses from half kneeling to high kneeling (both knees on the floor). Then, the person pushes back up through these steps to a sitting position.
- Start this process again from the beginning and continue now all the way to full kneeling, placing both hands on the floor to assume a prone kneeling position. Now lower the body from prone kneeling to side sitting/half sitting, then progress back though the chain until standing or sitting.
- The last learning step is to start the process from the beginning, lower the body to a side-lying position, as if you had just fallen to the floor or ground. From here, roll from side-lying to supine and progress back through the chain until standing or sitting.

Whichever method is chosen will be dependent on factors such as balance, strength, range of motion, cognition level; and, the person's personal wellbeing. The final outcome is to enable the
individual to assume a sitting or standing position again and call for additional help where necessary.

For more information on our upcoming events and fall prevention information, visit NVFPC.org.

Falls are not an inevitable part of aging. Falls are preventable!

COPYRIGHT 2012, All rights Reserved
The content of this article may be copied in full without special permission, provided it is used for nonprofit purposes and full attribution and copyright notice are given.