

Falls prevention needs multidisciplinary approach



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By 2051, a projected one in four Queenslanders will be aged 65 years or older. At least 25% of 'older people' have a fall each year. More than 40% have multiple falls. The number of hip fractures alone is expected to double by 2026 and quadruple by 2051.

So are falls preventable within our ageing population?

The short answer is yes. But there is not one simple solution for everyone. Numerous risk factors interact to contribute to a person's risk of falling – including:

- Physical – balance, gait, strength, conditioning, vision, sleep
- Pharmacological – medication interactions
- Psychological – fear of falling, depression / anxiety
- Environmental – footwear, home & community hazards, equipment

The more risk factors a person has, the greater their likelihood of falling – and subsequently falling again. Given the fact that falls are multi-factorial, falls prevention programs must be multidisciplinary in their approach.

Eden's Reconditioning Program for people who suffer from falls involves input from:

- Physiotherapist – balance, mobility, walking aids
- Occupational Therapist – self care, household tasks, community access, equipment, home modifications
- Exercise Physiologist – strength, balance, conditioning
- Nursing – continence
- Pharmacist – medication management
- Optometrist – visual impairment, safety, management strategies
- Dietitian – hydration and nutrition

Education sessions are also held on relevant topics such as footwear, sleep and fear of falling.

The six-week program comprises two four-hour sessions each week and is overseen by Eden's Specialist in Rehabilitation Medicine. Patients who may benefit include those with diagnoses that impact on balance, mobility, exercise endurance and/or safe access to home or community.

Patients are assessed prior to commencement of the program, and on completion, to assess changes in their balance, strength, endurance, mobility, confidence and functional capacity. Using the Falls Risk for Older People - Community Setting (FROP-Com) tool, each patient is also given a pre and post-program falls risk grading. Results of these assessments are communicated to the referring doctor.

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