

4 April 2014

Medicate right to stay upright

Health experts are highlighting the importance of managing medications to prevent falls as part of an April Falls campaign. Experts warned that some medications with, or without prescription, can make you dizzy or drowsy and can lead to a fall.

Ms Natalie Fester, Quality Manager at Liverpool Hospital said some medications such as sleeping tablets, pain killers, high blood pressure medication, fluid tablets and some mood disorder medications may increase a person's fall risk.

"These medications can cause unwanted side-effects such as, drowsiness, dizziness, poor balance, frequent/urgent urination and changes to eyesight, such as blurry vision," Ms Fester said.

"If you start taking a new medicine, change brands, take multiple medicines, or change your normal dose, you have an increased chance of experiencing the above side-effects, which can lead to a fall.

"It is important to talk to your doctor or pharmacist about your medications, and any potential side-effects.

"A fall is serious and can lead to long-term hospitalisation, loss of independence and the need for supported care," she said.

Ms Fester also said that although one in three people older than 65 have a fall each year, falls can be prevented with a few easy steps:

- Have an up-to-date list of your medications. Carry it with you. It can speak for you.
- Don't take anyone else's prescribed medication
- Read medication labels in good light and follow the instructions carefully.
- Don't use out-of-date medications. Return them to your pharmacist.
- Talk to your doctor or pharmacist regularly to review your medications, including any herbs or supplements (as they may react with your prescription medications).
- Ask your pharmacist about packaging your medications to help you manage them.

For more information on falls prevention visit www.cec.health.nsw.gov.au and click on the April Falls 2014 link.