

Falls prevention protocol WMAHSN-60

Purpose

- To enhance advice and support for self - help interventions for individuals at risk of falling while at home in the community.
- To improve the understanding by patients at risk of falls of how they can make changes to enable them to live independently.

Setting

Patients living in the community with support from a community falls prevention team.

Selection of participants

- Patients who have been assessed by a clinician as having a need for support to prevent falls, but who are still able to manage independently.
- Patients are able to respond to text messages sent to their mobile phone, or who have a carer or relative who can assist them with this.

Expected outcomes:

- Patients participate in programmes designed to help them remain independent.
- Patients have less need of interventions, and contact emergency services or attend A&E less often.
- Patients find Flo messages helpful and reassuring.
- Patients report that Flo reinforces good self- management.

Success criteria:

- 60% of patients enrolled on Flo respond to text messages for at least 3 weeks.
- 50% of patients respond to evaluation questions positively.
- 50% of patients report reduced number of falls.

Protocol

In summary:

Patient:

- receives daily information messages about falls prevention for up to three months.
- responds to monthly questions about number of falls experienced and usefulness of Flo, and to fortnightly questions about frequency of exercise.
- Signs consent form agreeing to read messages from Flo; accepting responsibility for their own health and acknowledging that automated messaging is from a computer and agree to contact their clinician in the usual way should their condition become worse.
- Understands that Flo texts are sent to a computer, not a human being; and that a member of the falls prevention team will only look at texts from the patient once per week.

Clinician:

- Obtains signed consent from patient and ensures participant understands they remain responsible for their own health.
- Supports participant in enrolling on Flo by using their current mobile phone number and then selecting the appropriate service for them.

- Utilises materials on how to sign up to Flo.
- Monitors texts sent in from patient at appropriate intervals, eg weekly.

Exercise questions

Every two weeks:

How many times did you miss doing your exercises this week? Please text EX1 if once or twice; EX2 if 3-4 times or EX3 if more than this. Thanks, Flo.

Reminder:

Hi, you've not said how often you've missed doing your exercises this week. Text: text EX1 if once or twice; EX2 if 3-4 times or EX3 if more than this.

Responses (rotate every 4 weeks):

1-2 times: That's good – setting a pattern of regular exercise keeps your muscles strong and your joints more supple.

Doing regular exercise help keep you fit, and to stay independent.

Great – you are taking control of your own health by doing your exercises.

Excellent – doing your exercises will help your confidence that you can make changes to improve your lifestyle

3-4 times It's really important to exercise regularly to build your strength and flexibility. Try to do it more often.

Exercise can seem a bit of a chore, so reward yourself afterwards, and don't have that cuppa or watch your TV programme until you've exercised.

Even if you've never exercised much before, it's never too late to start. Activities like shopping or working used to keep you fit. Now you need to try harder.

Exercising your muscles helps your balance, and so does changing your posture from time to time. Don't get chair-shaped!

>4 times Health professionals are able to help you, but can't do everything. You need to help yourself by following their advice about regular exercise.

If staying independent is important to you, exercise should be too. Without strong muscles you'll find it difficult to get out of bed.

You really can't rely on miracles to regain your previous life - so put in some effort to exercise, and you'll be surprised what a difference it can make.

If exercise was easy, everyone would be athletes. Doesn't everything require some effort? Marriage? Parenting? Job? Exercise and take control of your life.

Reminder message

Twice a week:

Hi, don't forget to do your exercises today. Thanks, Flo

Information messages

Once only on day 1:

Hello, I'm FLO and the next few weeks I'll be helping you to follow your Falls Management plan, by sending advice and reminders. Thanks, Flo.

Twice weekly from day 2:

If you have had a fall or feel you are at risk of having falls, ask your GP to do a falls risk assessment, which checks weight, blood pressure & circulation.

Check around your home for trip hazards such as loose rugs, trailing flexes and clutter. If you need help, ask someone to remove them for you.

If you use a walking aid, make sure it's the correct height.

Check that your shoes and slippers fit you properly and do not slip off your heels. You need footwear with good grip on the soles to avoid slipping on stairs and carpets.

Don't use furniture instead of a walking aid – by reaching out you'll rely on having something to lean on, and will feel more unsteady if there isn't anything.

'If you don't use it you lose it'. Keep muscles toned, flexible and strong by moving regularly, doing weight bearing exercises where possible and following your exercise plan.

If your joints are sore due to arthritis, keep them moving to prevent the muscles weakening and wasting. Regular pain relief and exercising within your limits will help.

Make sure you drink plenty to avoid dehydration, which can lead to confusion or sudden drop in blood pressure when you stand up, increasing your risk of falls.

[Healthy eating](#) is important to stop you getting deficient in vitamins. Eat a balanced diet with lots of fruit and vegetables.

If you wear glasses, an outdated prescription may increase fall risk. Have eye tests every 2 years. Tests can also detect conditions such as diabetes, glaucoma and cataracts.

Bifocal lenses may increase falls risks, so if you are at risk of falling, you may be better with 2 different pairs of glasses.

Don't rush to get out of a chair when the doorbell rings. Take time to steady yourself before setting off. If it's important the caller will wait.

Drink alcohol in moderation. It can make you drowsy and clumsy, which, if you are prone to falls, will increase your risk of falling.

Be aware of wet surfaces, particularly in the kitchen and bathroom which increase your risk of slips and trips.

If you struggle to get in/out of the bath or shower, or on/off the toilet, look in mobility shops or on the internet for equipment. Your GP can also advise.

When you're going to sit down, keep hold of any walking aid you have until you've turned round and can feel the chair behind your legs before sitting.

Check for hazards on your stairs, such as clutter, loose carpeting and broken or loose handrails.

Poor lighting, particularly during the night when you may get up in a drowsy state to use the bathroom, can increase your risk of falling. Switch on your light or get a plug in night light.

Ask someone to help you rearrange furniture if rooms are cluttered. This will give a clear path to walk, turn around and allow space for a zimmer or stick if you use them.

Rearrange storage in your kitchen and bathroom from high to low level cupboards and units, to prevent over-stretching or standing on stools/step ladders to access objects.

Have grab rails fitted in and outside your home where there is a level-change: steps up/down in cellars and gardens for example, and stairs.

Take extra care if you have a pet. They can settle down in unexpected places, just where you want to walk.

If you take more than four prescribed medicines regardless of the reason, this can increase your risk of falling. Ask your GP for a review to check you are on the most suitable medication.

Some medications cause drowsiness, confusion or slow down reaction times, all increasing risk of falls. Ask your GP for a review to check you are on the most suitable medication.

Patient Experience Questions

Baseline and end of months 1, 2, and 3:

Have Flo's reminders helped you to do your regular exercises? Please text: CC1 if they have; CC3 if they have not or CC2 if you are unsure. Thank you.

Reminder:

Hi, you haven't said whether Flo's reminders helped you to do your regular exercises. Text: CC1 if they have; CC3 if they have not or CC2 if you are unsure. Thanks.

How many times have you had a fall in the last month? Please text FALL, then the number of times. Thanks, Flo

Reminder:

Hi. You haven't said how many times have you had a fall in the last month. Please text FALL, then the number of times. Thanks, Flo

End of months 1, 2, and 3:

Did you find the messages helpful and interesting? Please text MESS 1 if you did, MESS 3 if not, or MESS 2 if you are unsure. Thanks, Flo

Reminder

Hi. You haven't said if you found the messages helpful and interesting. Please text MESS 1 if you did, MESS 3 if not, or MESS 2 if you are unsure. Thanks, Flo