

## FALLS PREVENTION AND MANAGING MEDICINES

You may be at greater risk of falling because you:

- take medicine known to increase the risk of falling
- simply take four or more different types of regular medications.

### What are medicines?

Medicines come in many forms, including tablets and capsules, skin patches, liquids, eye drops, sprays, inhalers, creams, suppositories and injections. They can be:

- Prescribed by doctors, naturopaths, herbalists or homeopaths.
- Purchased by yourself from chemists, supermarkets or health food shops.

### What types of medicines can increase the risk of falling?

- Sleeping tablets
- Medications taken for anxiety and depression
- Medications that can suddenly lower blood pressure

Sometimes there can be added risk when different medicines are combined.

## What do I need to look out for?

- Drowsiness
- Unsteadiness or poor balance
- Light-headedness
- Dizziness
- Blurred or double vision
- Difficulty thinking clearly
- Weakness
- A sudden drop in blood pressure when sitting or standing up

### Remember that:

- Certain medicines have unwanted effects, and some increase the risk of falling.
- Medicines affect different people in different ways – never take someone else’s medications.
- Medicine effects can change when different medicines (including those you purchase yourself or obtain from a naturopath) are combined.
- It is not always easy to notice if you have been affected by a new medicine or a change in dose of a medicine you already take. You may feel better than before and may not notice that you are a little less steady on your feet or that your vision is slightly blurred.
- Alcohol can react with medicines – always check medicine labels and follow the instructions or ask your doctor and pharmacist.

## What should I do?

- Keep an up-to-date list of your medications.
- Have your medicines and dosages reviewed on a regular basis. Ask your doctor which of your medications could increase your risk of falling. If you are on medications that could increase your risk of falling, ask if the dose can be reduced or stopped.
- Ask your doctor about referring you to a pharmacist to visit you at home under the free Home Medicines Review service.
- Make an appointment with your pharmacist for a Meds Check.
- Ask your doctor and pharmacist about ways to deal with sleep problems without using sleeping tablets.
- If you would like to stop taking sleeping tablets, discuss with your doctor first.
- Talk to your doctor and pharmacist if you are taking or thinking of taking any vitamin or herbal products, painkillers or any products that you purchase yourself.
- Consider purchasing an aid to help organise your medicines. For example, a 'box' type that you or your carer can fill each week. Or a 'blister' pack, where all your medicines are sealed into a 'bubble' for dose times (i.e. morning, dinner, night-time) – this is prepared by your pharmacist each week.

## Talk to your doctor and pharmacist

- Know what each medicine is for and how and when to take it.
- Know the benefits and risk of all the medicines you take and learn their names.
- Consumer Medicine Information leaflets are available in large print from your pharmacy for every prescription medicine and for some medicines that you can buy without a prescription.
- Ask the doctor or pharmacist to explain the information in the Consumer Medicine Information leaflet.

**Use a medicine review card and keep an up-to-date list of all the medications you take. Show the list to health professionals, including your dentist, when you have appointments.**