

## MEDIA RELEASE

8 April 2015

### April is No-Falls month

With statistics showing that more than 30 per cent of people over 65 will have a fall this year, *April No Falls Month* is an ideal time to raise awareness of falls prevention.

“Falls are a very common problem and can lead to significant functional loss, but preventing them is a case of addressing a range of factors,” said Ben Stuart, physiotherapist and A/Team Leader at Toowoomba Hospital’s Geriatric Adult Rehabilitation and Stroke Service (GARSS).

“Once a person has had a fall, a lot of elements come into play and the chances of having another increases significantly.

“The first step is to identify the cause of the fall, with common factors including trip hazards in the home; a decrease in balance and mobility due to ageing or illness; poor footwear; eyesight problems; and decreased sensation which can be associated with medical conditions like diabetes.

“Another thing to consider is that certain medications can sometimes cause or worsen dizziness and light-headedness.”

Mr Stuart said people can take a number of steps to prevent falls.

“The first thing to do is deal with those hazards around the home and make pathways and thoroughfares as clear as possible,” he said.

“Another very important factor is maintaining health and fitness, not just for falls, but for avoiding a range of other health conditions, so we encourage people to maintain a healthy balanced diet, walk regularly, and get their 30 minutes of exercise per day.

“It’s also very important to try to stay in good general health with regular checkups with a GP, eyesight checks, and visits to a podiatrist to keep feet in good shape.

“If people are on multiple medications and experiencing falls it’s vital to discuss their medications with their GP. A medication review will optimise the medications so that they are less likely to contribute to falls.”

If people have had a fall the best way to avoid another is to determine the reasons and seek advice on how to avoid it happening again.

“Once a person has had a fall, they can have significant fear about having another one, which can start a vicious cycle of limiting physical activity in trying to prevent another fall,” Mr Stuart said.

“The problem is that a reduction in physical activity can lead to loss of muscle strength and fitness, which only adds to the risk of another fall. “

“The good news is there is help available, so if a person is becoming increasingly unsteady on their feet or has had a fall, a discussion with their GP is important to identify the factors and form a management plan.

“The GP can refer them to an appropriate health care professional or a service like Toowoomba Hospital’s Geriatric Adult Rehabilitation and Stroke Service for an assessment and recommended course of action.”

**Ends**

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