

PREVENTING FALLS AMONG OLDER PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY

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Community

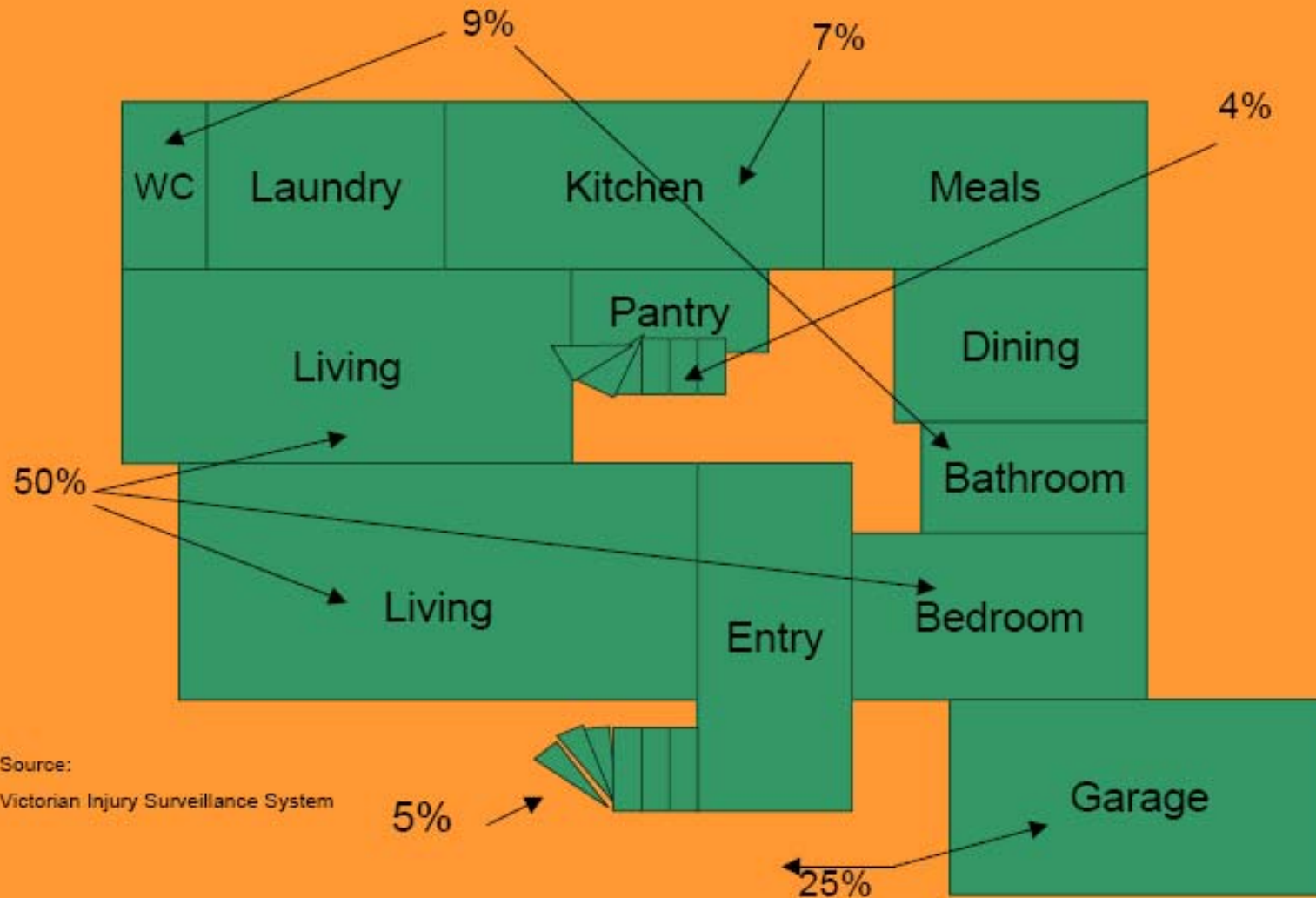
Occupational Therapist

NORTHERN SYDNEY
CENTRAL COAST
NSW HEALTH

Where falls occur in the community

- 65% of falls occur at home
- 50% in living areas and the bedroom
- Less than 10 % in bathrooms, toilets or kitchens
- 25% in public places; mainly on footpaths, in shopping centres and on stairs.

LOCATION OF FALLS



Source:
Victorian Injury Surveillance System

Falls Risk Factors

Risk factors for falls

- **Risk factors are usually divided into:**
 - **Intrinsic/Internal:** those that are particular to the person such as poor balance, chronic condition, poor vision.
 - **Extrinsic/External:** Environmental and hazards both in and out of the home

Common risk factors for falls

- Previous fall
- Poor mental state
- Unsafe mobility
- Visual impairment
- Incontinence
- Medications
- Home hazards
- Chronic conditions
- General wellness

Previous fall

- If an older person has had a fall this increases their risk of having another
- A Fall can lead to loss of confidence and reduction in activity which can lead to more falls.
- An Injury from a fall puts a person more at risk - particularly fractures.

Poor mental status

- Confusion and disorientation are closely linked to increased falls risk. Can be acute or long term.
- Dementia is very closely linked to falls risk due to decreased physical function and/or inability to make correct judgments – too cautious or not able to judge risk.
- Poor ability to follow safety instructions or to use devices such as personal alarms.

Unsafe mobility

- **Poor balance and decreased strength increases risk of falls.**
- **Decreased ability to walk safely around home environment and get out of chairs etc.**
- **Walking aids can increase risk if not properly prescribed, used or maintained.**

Visual impairment

- Impairment of vision such that everyday function is effected ie from disease process, cataracts etc.
- Normal aging reduces contrast sensitivity and reactions to glare increase.
- Vision prescription that is out of date
- Bi or multifocal glasses.

Incontinence

- Urinary/bowel urgency and/or incontinence are a risk for safely managing toileting.
- Rushing to the toilet can be unsafe if mobility is impaired.
- Managing pants and pads can lead to tripping or over balancing.
- More difficult to use hip protectors with pads.

Medications

- 4 or more medications linked to increased falls risk, if not properly prescribed and regularly reviewed.
- Side effects of some medication increase risk of falls ie dizziness, low blood pressure, urinary urgency etc.
- Sedatives/sleeping pills most implicated in falls.

Home Hazards

- Clutter impeding movement around house or use of walking aid
- Poor lighting
- Unsafe bathrooms/toilets
- Loose mats/ holes in carpet
- Slippery floors due to water or powder
- Moss/wet leaves on paths
- Hoses and pets.

Chronic Conditions

- Long term disability caused by chronic condition ie Osteo/Rheumatoid arthritis – reduced ability to mobilise and to save self from fall.
- Diabetes can lead to poor sensation in feet for walking and poor eyesight.
- Stroke disability is a particular risk – both due to physical and cognitive residual effects.

General wellness

- Frailty
- Osteoporosis – increased fracture risk
- Poor nutrition and hydration
- Obesity
- Alcohol consumption
- Acute illness
 - Can lead to such things as confusion and incontinence

What Can you do?

- Screen all clients over 65 for falls risk
 - Can be as simple as asking if they have had a fall in the last 12mths
 - Use a screening tool in NSCCH Community resource folder
- Know what the falls risks are and look for them during home visits

What Can you do?

- Discuss any identified falls risks with your clients/carers
- Refer clients at risk or who have had a fall to a health professional for a falls assessment eg Community Nurse, Occupational Therapist, GP, Physiotherapist etc

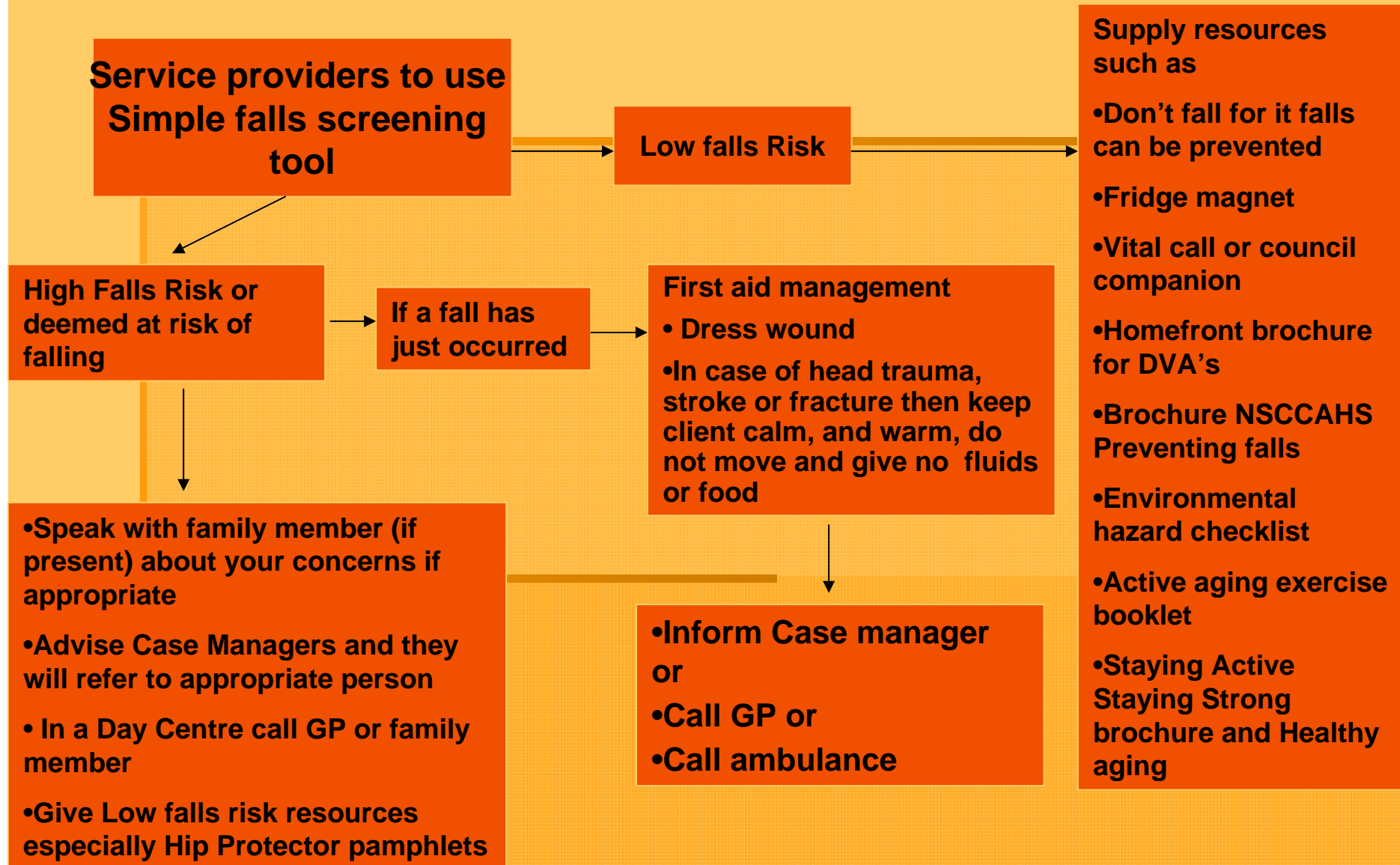
What can you do?

- Talk to and educate your care workers/volunteers about the falls risk – get them to report falls to the coordinator
- Provide Falls Prevention information to all clients/carers over 65 – talk to your clients about falls risks factors

What Can you do?

- Encourage clients/carers to participate in exercise programs developed by trained providers eg Active over 50's, Healthy Lifestyle
- Implement a "Falls Pathway" for your service

Example of Falls Pathway



Physical Activity

Central Coast - Active over 50's

- Gentle exercise
- Tai Chi
- Strength training
- Aqua fitness
- Ballroom dancing
- Ph: 4349 4800

- **Stepping On groups for 65+**
- Ph 0401715845

Consider Private Services

- Private Physiotherapy, Exercise Physiologists, Occupational Therapist
- Private home nursing/care services
- Private equipment loan service

Thank you.

Questions?