

GP Fact Sheet: Cognitive Impairment

Practice guidelines

 Risk factor studies show cognitive impairment increases fall risk by up to three-fold (meta-analysis) (Deandrea et. al. 2010).



Key points

- It is important to inform service providers of your patient's cognitive status to allow implementation of appropriate strategies.
- Older people with dementia have higher prevalence and greater severity of risk factors for falls, including:
 - Impairments of gait and balance (partially attributed to central neurodegenerative processes).
 - Decreased motor performance and attentional control particularly when performing an additional cognitive task.
 - Orthostatic hypotension (attributed to medications or dysautonomia).
 - o Increased behavioural risk factors e.g. wandering and agitation.
 - o Increased risk with environmental fall hazards (e.g. clutter, poor lighting).

GP and patient resources

- The GPCOG screening tool for cognitive impairment designed for the primary care setting: <u>http://www.detectearly.org.au/gpcog/</u>.
- Background information on dementia for you: <u>Alzheimer's Australia</u>
- A list of education resources for <u>patients and carers</u>.

References

Taylor, M., Delbaere, K., Close, J. C. T., & Lord, S. R. (2012). <u>Managing falls in older patients with cognitive impairment</u>. Aging Health, 8(6), 573-588.

© Clemson L, et al (2017). Integrated solutions for sustainable fall prevention in primary care, the iSOLVE project: a type 2 hybrid effectiveness-implementation design. *Implementation Science*, 12(1), 12.

Updated 1 July 2018. Refer to the iSOLVE provider resource 'Preventing Falls in Older Patients in the Community' for more information.