

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).
 - Increased behavioural risk factors e.g. wandering and agitation.
 - 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: <http://www.detectearly.org.au/gpcog/>.
- Background information on dementia for you: [Alzheimer's Australia](#)
- A list of education resources for [patients and carers](#).

References

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