

ASK THE DOCTOR



How Not To Fall

(NAPSA)—Here's uplifting news about avoiding dangerous falls.

Falls affect tens of thousands of Americans. In fact, each year about one-third of individuals 65 years of age or older will fall and some will even be disabled by the broken bones that can follow. Not only that, falls kill more than 16,000 Americans a year.

These falls are not just the result of getting older. They are usually caused by a number of factors and by changing some of these things you can lower your risk.

In many cases, a fall can be caused by medications you're taking. Common culprits include sedatives, muscle relaxants and blood pressure drugs that can cause dizziness, light-headedness or loss of balance. When two or more medications are used in combination, these side effects may be aggravated.

It's important to talk to your doctor or pharmacist about all the medicines you take—including over-the-counter ones such as cold medicines. As you get older, the effects of medications on your body can change, and some medicines or combinations can make you drowsy or light-headed. Always be sure to ask your doctor about:

- What the medicine does
- When and how to take it
- Possible side effects and interactions, including with foods, drinks, herbal medicines and supplements you may be taking
- Things to avoid while taking the medicine, such as driving
- How you'll know it's working.

In addition, make sure you know the names of all medicines



Talk with your doctor or pharmacist to avoid falls caused by your medication.

you're taking, what you're taking them for and dosage requirement. Most importantly, learn what needs to be done if you experience adverse effects including when to contact your physician. For example, it might be useful to make a list and keep it where it can easily be found in an emergency.

Interim HealthCare, a leading provider of home care and supplemental health care staffing, has developed a new fall prevention program. The SureStepsSM program represents the next generation of initiatives aimed at reducing the risk of falls among the elderly within their homes. As part of its consumer education, Interim HealthCare also offers a free unique interactive web activity called the SureStepsSM House. Visitors to the site at www.interimhealthcare.com can help Stanley SureStepsSM uncover 26 hidden hazards in his house and learn helpful tips about how to prevent falls.