

Injury Alert:

Environmental Checklists for Falls Prevention

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As health care providers with the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, we have a responsibility to keep clients safe when visiting our offices and clinics. Since falling is a leading cause of injury-related death in older adults and also causes serious injuries to all people of all ages, we must work to prevent falls at our sites. Two leading patient safety organizations, Accreditation Canada and Safer Healthcare Now! have also made falls prevention a priority. In the Falls Prevention Required Organizational Practice (ROP), Accreditation Canada suggests several activities that sites might consider in a falls prevention strategy, including a review of the physical environment.

To assist sites in reducing falls hazards in the environment and in meeting the ROP, the Community and Ambulatory Care Fall Prevention Working Group created two tools to help community based sites critically assess and correct environmental hazards that could lead to a fall. There is a checklist to help identify potential fall hazards in existing offices and clinics and a checklist to help inform construction of new sites and renovations. For each checklist, *Instructions for Use* and *Documentation of Action* forms were developed to help sites use the checklists and document what was done to reduce the fall risks.

The checklists and supporting documents been piloted by several sites within the Region and recommendations have been included in these final versions.

Community and Ambulatory Care Environmental Checklist for Fall Prevention

This checklist helps assess areas the public can access such as hallways, waiting rooms, stairs and examination rooms as well as signage and outdoor areas. The information can be used to inform maintenance and repairs required.

It is recommended that this checklist be done twice a year, in winter and spring/summer. At minimum, it should be done annually. Temporary community-based sites, such as immunization clinics, should use this checklist to help ensure that clients are visiting a safe environment.

Community and Ambulatory Care Environmental Checklist for Fall Prevention: Planning for Construction or Renovation

This checklist should be used when planning new construction or renovating clinic space to allow so that hazards can be identified and addressed before construction begins. The checklist should be completed by staff involved in the design and planning of the project, a manager or staff member trained in occupational health and safety is used to identify environmental factors that may increase risk of falls when planning to construct or renovate clinic space.

Both checklists, instructions and documentation forms as well as other information on preventing falls are available at www.preventfalls.ca and click on the "Professionals" tab.

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