

MARBLE VALLEY HEALTHWORKS

Personalized Medical Practice

**Bruce Bullock, MD * Seth Coombs, MD
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Visit us on the web:

www.YourHealthYourDoctor.com



**FALL
PREVENTION**

Falls are the most frequent cause of injuries that require medical attention. They happen most often to the very young and the very old.

Besides being common, falls in these two groups are quite

different: children fall more in the summer, while adults have more problems in the winter. The mechanisms, risks and prevention strategies differ as well. We'll cover childhood falls in the spring newsletter, and concentrate now on falls in adults.

Adults over age 65 years fall twice as much as younger adults. Not only do falls result in death more often than any other kind of trauma (including car accidents), but they are also the leading cause of lost independence and mobility. Fortunately, most falls result in minor or no injuries, but the difference between an injury-free fall versus a hip fracture or concussion is often a matter of luck. It makes sense then to avoid falls as much as possible. There are risk factors that can be recognized and addressed in an effort to lessen falls.

What are the risk factors that lead to falls?

- Muscle weakness
- Low blood pressure
- Foot problems
- Poor vision
- Medicines
- Poor balance
- Slow reflexes
- Nerve problems
- Confusion

These risk factors are often inter-related: e.g. weak legs contribute to poor balance, and confusion can result from low blood pressure. While they can't all be fixed, one or two adjustments can have profound benefits. Let's look more closely at each one.

Weakness, especially in the legs and poor balance can be helped by exercise - anything from short walks down the hall to dedicated strength training directed by physical therapy. Weakness and imbalance can also be helped with walking aids, such as canes, walkers and handrails along staircases.

Many adults are on medicine to control elevated blood pressure. Recommendations for controlling blood pressure in older people has "relaxed" in the last few years, partly in recognition of the fall risk from blood pressure that is too low. In most cases, systolic BP less than 130 is lower than necessary and could make falls more likely. Drinking an adequate amount of fluids is also important to prevent blood pressure from dropping with changes in position.

Proper footwear and foot care can ameliorate risk from arthritic or mechanical foot problems. Painful foot problems like arthritis and bunions can often be helped. Being able to plant your feet confidently and comfortably is important for a stable gait.

Confusion is often due to medical problems and not avoidable. However, alcohol, sleep deprivation, stress and medicines can cause temporary confusion and should be used wisely or managed actively. Besides confusion, medicines have been known to cause every problem listed above, and more. Some, like sedatives, opioid pain relievers and sleep medicines are very hazardous and need to be used very carefully. Many heart and blood pressure medicines can lead to dehydration, dizziness and weakness. Others can lead to fatigue and sensory changes. Responses to medicine are very different from person to person, so it's important to recognize possible side effects. Studies also show that individuals taking more than four prescription medicines are at increased risk of falling. We make an effort to pare your medicines at your annual Comprehensive Well Exam. If you feel you might not need one of your medicines, or if you don't like how it's making you feel, please bring it to our attention. Slow reflexes, nerve problems, poor vision and dementia often cannot be helped directly. In these cases, it's important to make the environment is as safe as possible. Examples include:

- Adequate lighting
- Floor surfaces with good traction and no loose rug edges or cluttered floors
- Hand railings along staircases and long hallways
- Proper maintenance of outdoor walkways
- Bathrooms with grab bars and adequate space for walkers
- Avoid carrying large loads up or down stairs. Keep one hand free to grab handrail.

And when falls can't be avoided, it's important to be ready:

- Bring a buddy if you are taking chances (using a ladder, walking in the winter)
- Keep a phone handy
- Install a home alert system

Falls can happen for many reasons - some avoidable and some not. If you have concerns about falls, be sure to discuss it with us so that we can help you prepare.

The National Institute of Health provides more information about falls at:

<https://nihseniorhealth.gov/falls/causesandriskfactors/01.html>

SUZANNE JONES, PA-C

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT

Many of you already know Suzanne from visiting her in the office. She has worked alongside Drs. Coombs and Bullock since 2000, and is a vital part of MVHW's clinical team.

Suzanne earned her Bachelor of Science degree from St. Lawrence University. She went on to graduate with a Master's degree in Nutrition from the University of Vermont in 1991 and then a Physician Assistant degree from Yale University School of Medicine in 1993.

Suzanne's clinical interests include women's health, with a focus on preventative care as well as helping patients with nutrition and building healthy lifestyles. She also enjoys seeing patients with acute illness and injuries, and helping patients manage conditions such as hypertension, diabetes and hyperlipidemia. In addition to caring for her own patients, Suzanne will see patients of Dr. Coombs and Dr. Bullock if they are away or making rounds. Suzanne is available for routine gynecologic care for women of all ages, and for nutritional and lifestyle counseling for improving diabetes, blood pressure, kidney disease and weight loss. She enjoys the extended office visit time so she can listen to and get to know her patients.

Outside the office, Suzanne's interests include staying physically active with running, hiking, and skiing. She was inducted into the St. Lawrence University Athletic Hall of Fame in 2010 for achievements in lacrosse and skiing. She lives in Mendon with her husband, two children and two Labrador Retrievers.

Please visit our website:

www.YourHealthYourDoctor.com

Have you joined our Patient Portal?

The Patient Portal is our secure e-mail communication tool.

Please contact our office today to enroll!

(802) 770-1805

NEW YEAR

...NEW INSURANCE ?

Please bring your Insurance cards to your next appointment.

Our staff, probably Rita, will be asking to review and/or take a copy of your 2017 insurance card(s).

We appreciate your cooperation, as having the correct information in our data base makes for a smooth clean billing process.

UNITED HEALTHCARE MEDICARE ADVANTAGE

Dr Coombs will soon be a participating provider with United Health Care (UHC) Medicare Advantage plans, effective February 1st, 2017.

UPDATE

In effort to improve your communication with our office, we ask that you contact us using the following number only:

(802) 770-1805

For all your needs: *Scheduling

* Prescription Refills * Medical questions

* Billing questions

BRUCE BULLOCK, MD
SETH COOMBS, MD
SUZANNE JONES, PA-C



FLU VACCINE Here and AVAILABLE

Option 1: Request the vaccine during your regularly scheduled appointment

Option 2: Call and schedule a Nurse visit time

Monday thru Thursday (only):

9:00am – 12:30pm, or 2:30 – 4:30pm

Option 3: Walk-in, no appointment necessary,

Tuesday afternoons: 2:00p – 4:30p

OR

Wednesday mornings: 9:00a – 12:30p



on: