

Walking after meals could save older people from a fall

March 25 2015, by David Ellis

Going for a walk instead of resting after eating could help to save older people from some falls caused by a sudden loss in blood pressure, according to new research.

Post-prandial hypotension is a fall in [blood pressure](#) seen within two hours of eating a meal. This health condition commonly affects [older people](#) – after a meal (usually breakfast), an [older person](#) may feel tired, dizzy or even experience a fall.

"Although this condition is common in older people, many are not aware of it," says the University of Adelaide's Professor Renuka Visvanathan, Director of the Adelaide Geriatrics Training and Research with Aged Care (G-TRAC) Centre, and Director of Aged and Extended Care Services at The Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

"Falls among older people often result in fractures, and those who experience a fall may lose confidence as well as lose their independence. Falls can also be fatal for older people," she says.

Professor Visvanathan says researchers have been trying to better understand the reasons as to why this condition occurs, in the hopes of developing improved treatments or preventing post-prandial hypotension.

Research by University of Adelaide student Dr Shailaja Nair and University of South Australia student Ms Zoe Kopsaftis, working under

the supervision of Professor Visvanathan and Dr Diana Piscitelli from the University of South Australia, has now confirmed that older people with post-prandial hypotension should be encouraged to walk intermittently at a normal pace for at least 120 minutes after a meal, as a means of reducing the fall in bloodpressure.

"This advice, coupled with other practical strategies, such as drinking a glass of water with meals, may help older people avoid the consequences of post-prandial hypotension," Professor Visvanathan says.

"Much of the research conducted to date has been undertaken in healthy older people, but this new research has involved people with a confirmed diagnosis of the condition," she says.

Provided by University of Adelaide

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