

# Helping prevent falls in older adults with dementia

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Annually, about one-third of all American adults aged 65 or older experience a fall. Falls are a major cause of medical problems, especially among those who have dementia. In fact, twice the number of older adults with dementia experience falls, compared to people without dementia.

What's more, [older adults](#) with [dementia](#) or other cognitive problems who fall are five times more likely to be admitted to long-term care facilities, and are at higher risk for fractures, head injuries, and even death, compared to older adults without dementia who experience a fall.

Researchers have recently focused on the role that dementia and other [cognitive problems](#) may play in falling, in hopes of discovering ways to manage and prevent falls. They published their study in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*.

The research team reviewed several studies examining the role of cognitive function—the ability to think and make decisions—on falls. They also

studied ways to help prevent falls by using methods that help improve cognitive function.

The researchers discovered that poor performance on tests for attention and decision-making was linked to walking slowly, being unstable on your feet, and experiencing falls. They also learned that certain kinds of "brain training" may be helpful in improving mobility and preventing falls.

One important finding this study revealed is that people with [mild cognitive impairment](#) may be at risk for dementia in the future, and may also be at risk for falls. The researchers suggested that older adults at this early stage of developing thinking problems might be candidates for therapies that could help prevent [falls](#).

**More information:** Manuel Montero-Odasso et al, Falls in Cognitively Impaired Older Adults: Implications for Risk Assessment And Prevention, *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* (2018). [DOI: 10.1111/jgs.15219](https://doi.org/10.1111/jgs.15219)

Provided by American Geriatrics Society

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