

# ACT

## Falls and Crashes: Don't!!!

Falls and driver crashes are concerns at any age but can be especially serious as we get older. Here are some insights from ACT-related studies:

**Falls** can cause injuries to our brains and bones. Injurious falls can be the start of a downhill slide leading to dependency, increased risk of dementia and death. A fall can be a “wake up” call to do everything possible to prevent future falls. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. To help prevent falls:

- exercise regularly;
- check vision regularly;
- try to avoid medications that affect balance;
- avoid or be extra careful on slippery surfaces;
  - don't walk barefoot or in socks or stockings on smooth surfaces (a shoe with a tennis type sole is best);
- remove trip hazards like loose cords;
- don't shy away from use of assistive devices like canes and walkers if needed; and
- be aware of how alcohol affects balance and don't over imbibe.

Below are a few articles around this topic:

- *Larson, EB. (2017). "Evidence Supports Action to Prevent Injurious Falls in Older Adults." JAMA 318(17):1659-1660. PMID:29114812*
- *Koepsell TD, et al. (2004). "Footwear style and risk of falls in older adults." J Am Geriatr Soc. PMID: 15341551.*

**A fall or crash with a head injury** should be an even bigger “wake up” call. A second serious head injury increases risk of dementia. A head injury can also affect balance, leading to an increasing tendency to fall. Balance exercises are an excellent idea at any age and can improve your balance dramatically. (*Dams-O'Connor, K., et al. (2013). "Risk for late-life re-injury, dementia and death among individuals with traumatic brain injury: a*

*population-based study." J Neurol Neurosurg Psychiatry 84(2): 177-182. PMC3752841).*

**Driving** can be a significant area of concern as we age. A recently published study using ACT data showed that poorer performance on the ACT screening test (CASI) was associated with an increase in driver crash risk. This result doesn't tell us exactly when driving becomes unsafe. However, it does point out the need for everyone to monitor whether they are still able to drive safely. Like a fall, a single crash could be thought of as a “wake up” call and should prompt a plan to avoid another crash. (*Fraade-Blonar, LA, et al. (2018). "Cognitive Decline and Older Driver Crash Risk." J Am Geriatr Soc. PMID:29667168*)

## Activity Monitor update

A huge **THANK YOU** to everyone who wore a physical activity monitor over the last two years! We are busy analyzing the data from more than 1150 participants to date, and we look forward to sharing some early findings with you in the next newsletter. Stay tuned!

If you agreed to wear an activPAL (thigh device), we may ask you to wear one a second time. The activPAL measures small movements, such as transitions from sitting to standing. The ACT study would be among the first to look at these changes over time as they relate to aging processes.

## JUST FOR FUN:

**Question:** Why should you not write with a dull pencil?

**Answer:** It would be pointless!

## CONTACT US

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