

Dear PAC Consultant,

My dad has dementia, and lives with me. He keeps falling. So far, he hasn't had any major injuries - he has been very lucky. I am thinking this is going to be the thing that takes him down – literally. Why is this happening, and how can I prevent it?

Fear of Falls in Foster

Dear Fear of Falls in Foster,

Thanks for reaching out. So, your dad is falling a lot. That has got to be scary for both of you, and for anyone else in your dad's circle of care. Very sorry to hear this is happening, and while I suspect this won't make it any less scary, please know that this is not unusual. I am happy to hear he has not had any injuries thus far. He is very lucky, indeed. You have asked two great questions. I will do my best to explore the many variables that come into play. Then I will offer a few possible strategies to consider.

First, let's work through the *why*. As you may be aware, the risk of falls increases as we age, whether or not dementia is present. Here are some reasons why this occurs:

- Decreased physical strength and balance changes due to loss of muscle mass from inactivity combined with nutritional deficiencies
- medication side effects
- vision changes
- fatigue
- physical changes due to other health conditions

When a dementia-causing disease is added to the mix, there is more going on to increase that risk. These include:

- more dramatic changes to our loved one's visual field. Watch this clip, [click here](#)
- physical changes related to the progression of the specific dementia-causing condition
- inability to properly use assistive devices
- memory challenges
- a person's decrease in safety awareness combined with an increase in curiosity
- a changing ability to express or meet a need (as an example: perhaps your dad needs to go to the bathroom, and he may just proceed in that direction whether or not his body is capable of taking him there)

So, what do we do to decrease the risk of falls? Strategies depend on which variables are most prominent for your dad. When you think about his past falls, does anything from the above list seem to be a possible cause? Strategies may range from environmental changes, such as creating clear pathways from place to place, to reducing distractions, to focusing on meeting those unmet needs, to adding routines for engagement that result in your dad wanting to stay put while doing something he enjoys, to learning how to best physically support him as he moves from place to place – any and all of these may apply. The possibilities are many.

If you like research, here is a study on this topic, [click here](#).

If you prefer a less scientific read, you may be interested in this, [click here](#).

As always, if you'd like to have a consultation to explore customized strategies based on your specific situation, you are encouraged to contact us at consult@teepasnow.com, and we will set up a free 30 minute phone consultation. We are here to help!

**Sincerely,
PAC Consultant**