

# Mabel has had a fall - and she's not happy!

## Working together to prevent falls



**Education session developed by:** Barwon Health Primary Care Forum – SAIL Falls Prevention Program

An innovative approach to raising awareness of falls to seniors living independently in their own home. This interactive, light-hearted performance is based around a character named Mabel who has had a problem with her balance. Through her story the audience learns how Mabel can reduce her risk of falling and continue living safely at home. The session takes about half an hour depending on audience participation. The suggested script and format can be adapted to suit the target audience.

(Downloadable)

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In 2005 the Department of Human Services funded the National Ageing Research Institute to review and recommend a set of falls prevention resources for general use. The materials used as the basis for this generic resource were developed by the Barwon Health Primary Care Forum – SAIL Falls Prevention Program under a Service Agreement with the Department of Human Services. This and other falls prevention resources are available from the department's Aged Care website at: <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/agedcare>.

# **Mabel has had a fall – and she's not happy!**

## **An information and education session for older adults.**

An interactive, light-hearted performance has been developed to help promote the messages of safe, active and independent living for older community dwelling adults.

The performance is based around a character named Mabel who has recently had a problem with her balance. The audience get to know Mabel and learn that with support from professionals in the community, the risk of a fall can be modified to help her continue to live safely in her home.

Mabel's first performance was held at the Belmont Senior Citizens Club and resulted in a very lively interaction between the audience and the presenters. Fifty-four people attended this session during Injury Prevention week.

The performance takes about half an hour, dependent upon audience participation.

The suggested script and format can be adapted to suit the target audience. If you would like to develop something similar in your area and wish to discuss this concept further, contact Sue Morgan, SAIL Project, Barwon Health on 5250 3608 or [SUEMO@BarwonHealth.org.au](mailto:SUEMO@BarwonHealth.org.au)

### **The purpose of the performance:**

#### **Aims**

- To raise awareness about safety and falls prevention in the home

#### **Objectives**

- To identify some of the causes of falls in the home
- To identify avenues of access to advice and assistance to reduce personal risk
- To provide information about services that can assist in reducing falls risk

## Suggested script and format:

# **Mabel has had a fall – and she's not happy!**

**To begin start by explaining who you are and where you come from then move on to the scripted material.**

### **Facilitator/educator:**

What I would like to talk to you about is falls. We've probably all had a bit of a stumble at some point or another or know someone who has had a fall. Having a fall can be quite a disaster in that you may injure yourself, causing quite a deal of discomfort and considerable disruption to your independence. Often people can escape a fall unharmed but their confidence is dented and they are reluctant to do things they once did. So once again your independence is affected.

Accidents will happen but what I want to concentrate on today is how to avoid falls through a safe and active lifestyle which will enhance your independence and allow you to continue doing those things that are important to you, be they playing golf, going for a walk or simply getting out of the house to see friends. We want to help you maintain your current lifestyle or even increase your independence by minimising those things that will put you at risk of having a fall and increasing those things that can reduce your risk.

To help out today I've asked someone to come along and join us. Her name is Mabel. She'll be up here in just a minute.

**(Signal to Mabel to come up front).**

**(Mabel seated close to front of group. Mabel rises slowly from chair with some difficulty & slowly makes her way out the front).**

### **Facilitator/educator:**

Mabel agreed to come in today after a fall she had a couple of weeks ago. That's when I met her.

After the fall Mabel went to see her doctor who contacted the Community Health Centre. We went to visit Mabel and were a bit concerned at some of the potential dangers we noticed in Mabel's house. These were things that may have caused the fall. When Mabel comes up see if you can see anything that might have caused her to fall.

Here she is and she's going to tell you a bit about herself.

**(Mabel arrives up the front exhibiting some of the following falls risks: loose slippers, dressing gown with hem & cord that's too long, poorly suited walking stick. She manages to trip on a cord or stumble on a mat (but quickly regains her balance) and gingerly sits in a chair without arms).**

**Mabel:**

Hello. Yes, well, I had a small fall a couple of weeks ago getting out of bed during the night. I'm not sure just how it happened. It was dark of course. I should have turned on the light but I guess I was in a bit of a hurry. It may have been the bedspread. I have a beautiful quilt which is lovely and warm in the winter but as the weather warms I'm inclined to kick it off. My other thought was that I might have tripped on the chair next to my door. It's there as a steadier when my stick is out of reach. But I really can't remember cause I was in a bit of a hurry and it was just to do something little. I wanted to check the backdoor. I wasn't going to be able to sleep until I made sure it was shut. Living alone I get a little uncomfortable at night. I always make sure the doors are locked, usually straight after I have dinner, but I'd been out all night. It was my nephew's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday party. I didn't stay all night but it was still a late night for me. I also had a dance, which was lovely. I used to like dancing but I'm really past all that now.

Well the door was locked but I didn't find that out until after I picked myself up off the floor. I tripped somewhere between the bedroom and the hallway and must have hit my leg on the chair next to the door. It hurt a little but I was so frustrated that I didn't notice the blood on my leg until the next morning. My daughter took me to see my doctor the next morning.

**Facilitator/educator:**

Thanks Mabel. We really appreciate you coming along today to tell us about the troubles you've had.

**Mabel:**

Yes it was nice wasn't it. Thank you.

**(Mabel slowly pushes herself out of the chair and leaves in a similar fashion to which she arrived).**

**Facilitator/educator:**

Now that Mabel has left us can anyone think of anything that may have caused her fall?

**Responses may include:**

- **Loose slippers – provide information about appropriate footwear**
- **Dressing gown that was too long – loose dangling clothes are easy to trip on and can get caught on objects**
- **Walking stick – did she use it and is it the correct type/size. All walking aids should be prescribed and checked by a professional**
- **Bed spread**
- **Cord left lying on floor**
- **Loose mat**
- **Chair without arms**
- **Walking in the dark, not turning on the light**
- **Chair by the bedside – placement and safety, can her walking aid be more safely placed at the bedside?**

**Discuss with group and extend or add to any comment as necessary**

**Facilitator/educator:**

One thing that I noticed and you may not have picked up on is that Mabel had been dancing, which is something she rarely does because as she explained she is 'past all that' now. Exercise, of almost any form, providing it is safe, is something that we strongly encourage at any age. Exercise can help maintain or even increase your muscle strength, balance and endurance and can help reduce your risk of having a fall.

If you're concerned about falling yourself, feel you would like a little more information or assistance or think that perhaps you would like to be more active, I'd just like to let you know about some of the services that are available locally and who you can speak to for further assistance.

**You may include information on –**

- **exercise classes in your region**
- **other physical activity opportunities**
- **Primary Care, Community Health Services**
- **occupational therapy, physiotherapy, podiatry**
- **brochures**
- **how your doctor can help.**

At the end of the session thank everyone for their attendance and ensure that they know how to contact you if they would like further information.

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Note: A range of falls prevention resources are available from the Department of Human Services Aged Care website (details below) for distribution to participants.