

# Falls prevention & podiatry

## Working together to prevent falls



**Education program developed by:** Boroondara Primary Care Partnership

This is a detailed education program. There are four sessions, each developed to run for 2 ½ hours, to groups of up to 20 people. Sessions are conducted by multi-disciplinary staff and target seniors (and their families/carers) who have a moderate to high risk of falls. Sessions include:

- 1) general health and medication;
- 2) home safety and public safety;
- 3) exercise and fitness, and feet and footwear; and
- 4) vision and healthy diet.

The manual includes a program outline, sample letters, handouts (although it has also been designed for discipline specific handouts to be provided by the various disciplines presenting), evaluation forms and a participant falls risk check list. The program also includes discipline specific PowerPoint presentations.

(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 Boroondara Primary Care Partnership 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>.

# FALLS PREVENTION & PODIATRY



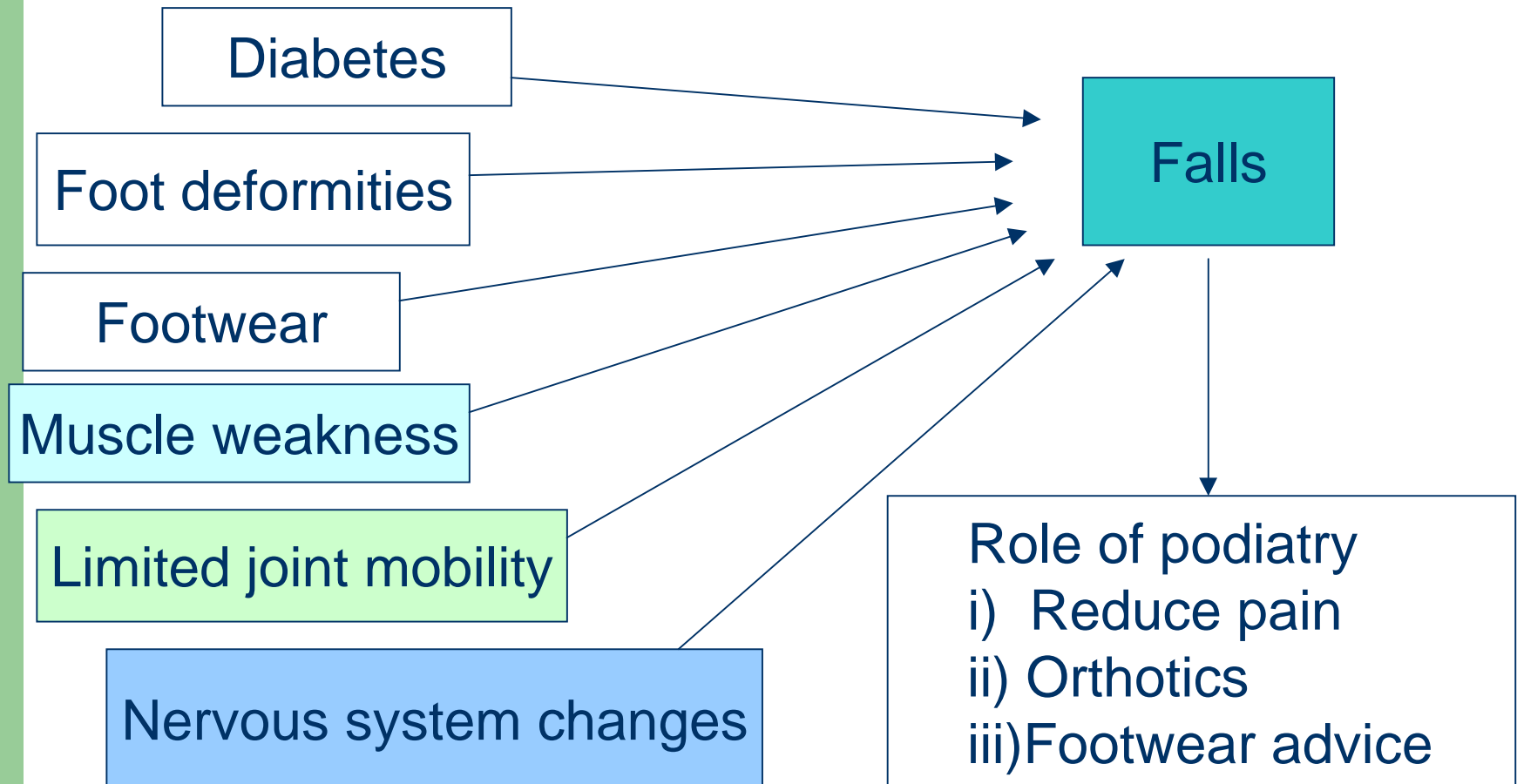
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# Introduction - Feet, footwear and falls

- The role of feet and footwear are often overlooked as causative factors for falls
- Our feet provide the foundation for static support and progression of our body during walking
- Identifying risk factors intrinsic and extrinsic to the foot that lead to falls allows the establishment of preventative strategies

# Outline of presentation



# Feet and falls

- A number of age related changes effecting the feet might contribute to balance problems and falls. These changes include:
  - i) Muscle weakness
  - ii) Limited joint movement (range of motion)
  - iii) Changes to the nervous system

# Foot problems and falls

- A number of foot problems can alter the pressure distribution beneath the feet and lead to balance problems and falls. These problems include:
  - i) Bunions
  - ii) Toe deformities - clawed toes, retracted toes and hammer toes
  - iii) Limited joint movement

# Foot pain and falls

- Corns, callouses and nail deformities can cause significant discomfort and result in an awkward walking pattern which might lead to balance problems and increase the likelihood of falling

# Diabetes and falls

- The processes of diabetes can lead to complications in the feet
- People with diabetes may develop peripheral neuropathy and/or limited joint mobility which might predispose them to falls

# Podiatry and falls

- As foot pain is amenable to treatment, podiatric intervention has the potential to improve mobility and postural stability. Podiatric treatment might include:
  - i) Reduction of corns, callouses and nail care
  - ii) Toe props and/or toe separators
  - iii) Foot orthoses

# Footwear and falls

- Footwear is often implicated as a factor contributing to instability and leading to falls
- Ill fitting, slippery and/or high heels increases the risk of falls

# Footwear and falls

- The most appropriate shoe for everyday use comprises most of the following features:
  - Accurate fit - width, length and depth
  - Low broad heel
  - Firm heel collar and counter
  - Fastening mechanism
  - Thin and firm non slip soles
  - Breathable upper and lining

Specialty shoe stores tailor for unusually shaped feet

# Conclusion

- Inappropriate footwear, foot problems and foot pain are contributing factors for postural instability
- Your podiatrist is trained in the management and prevention of foot problems and can identify factors intrinsic and extrinsic to the feet that might increase the risk of falls



# Acknowledgement

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- Special thanks to the specific organisations involved in the development of the original product: **Inner East Community Health Service**, Inner East Division of General Practice, Elgin Street Centre, City of Boroondara, Vision Australia, St George's Health Service.