

# Reducing the risk of falls in persons with dementia

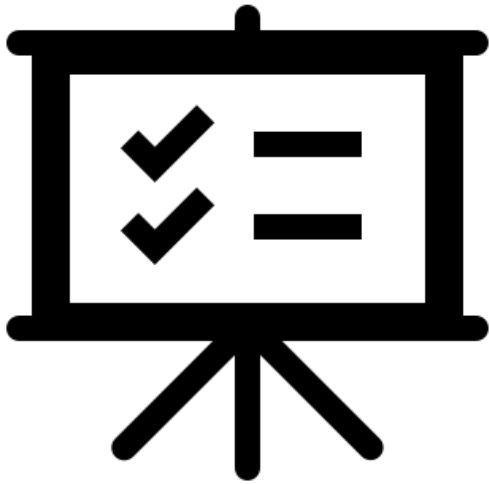
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Wisconsin Alzheimer's Institute

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN  
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

# Learning objectives



- List the causes of falls in persons with dementia
- Describe the epidemiology of falls in older adults
- List the consequences of falls
- Develop a plan to reduce the risk of falls in persons with dementia

# Falls in older adults: risk factors

- history of falls
- problems with gait or balance
- visual deficit
- arthritis/pain
- Parkinson disease, stroke
- muscle weakness, low body mass
- limitations of activities of daily living
- depression, anxiety
- **cognitive impairment**
- high alcohol consumption
- **psychotropic medications**

# Risk of falling, by drug category

Category	OR (95% CI)
<b>antidepressants</b>	<b>1.68 (1.47-1.91)</b>
antipsychotics	1.59 (1.37-1.83)*
<b>benzodiazepines</b>	<b>1.57 (1.43-1.72)</b>
<b>sedative/hypnotics</b>	<b>1.47 (1.35-1.62)</b>
<b>antihypertensives</b>	<b>1.24 (1.01-1.50)</b>
<b>NSAIDs</b>	<b>1.21 (1.01-1.44)</b>
<b>diuretics</b>	<b>1.07 (1.01-1.14)</b>
beta-blockers	1.01 (0.86-1.17)
narcotics	0.96 (0.78-1.18)

\* not statistically significant, after adjusting for confounding factors

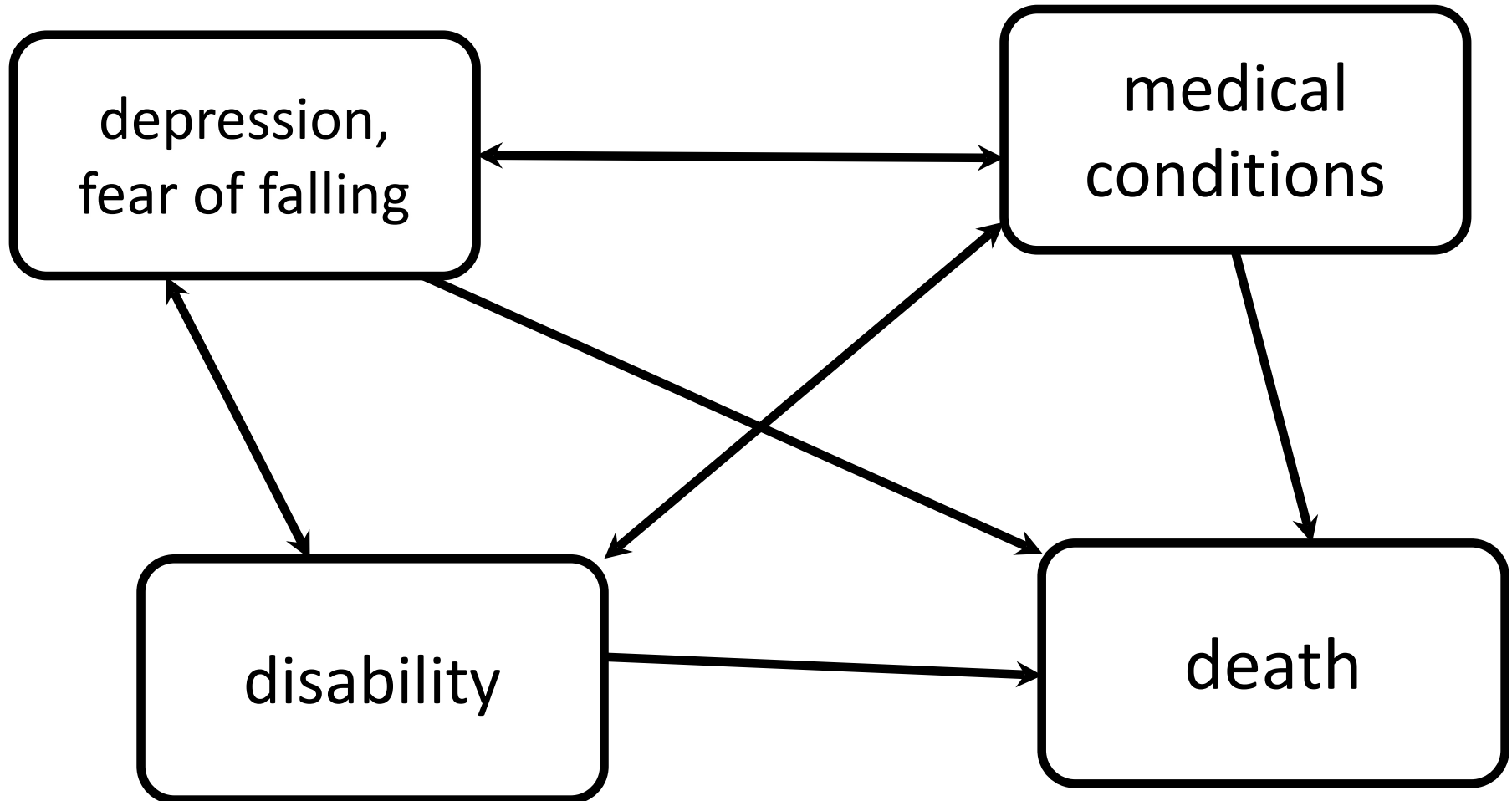
# Falls: epidemiology

1/3 of community dwelling older adults fall each year

50-80% of elders with dementia fall each year

Falls account for a large proportion of the injuries sustained by older adults

# Possible consequences of falling



# CDC recommendations to assess and decrease risk of falls

- stop or reduce doses of meds that can cause falls
- check for orthostatic hypotension
- check visual acuity
- assess gait, e.g., Timed Up & Go (TUG)
- refer to PT and/or home exercise program
- modify home to promote safety

stand up from a chair  
walk 10 feet  
return to chair  
→ *if this takes 12+ seconds, patient is at higher risk of falling*



# Advice for family caregivers

- encourage your loved one to keep moving
- have your loved one's eyes and feet checked
- make the home a safer place for walking
  - reduce clutter
  - remove throw rugs
  - add grab bars to bathroom
  - install handrails & lights on staircases
  - make sure home has lots of light