

Long-Term Care Survey Alert

Care Planning: Help Fall-Proof Your Parkinson's Residents With These Therapy And Restorative Approaches

Here are some tricks from a pro.

What's the most common reason people with Parkinson's disease fall?

Rigidity and loss of balance, says **Bob Kann, PT**, rehab director at **Laurels of Shane Hill**, a skilled nursing and rehab facility in Rockford, OH, and originator of a renowned specialized therapy program for people with PD now used nationwide.

"Freezing is definitely a reason for falling," Kann adds, "and people with PD have a gait where they speed up and walk really fast," which causes a fall. To help a resident who finds himself almost running, Kann helps the person improve his gait and teaches him to stop when he feels himself propelling forward.

Practice makes perfect: To help residents perfect the new skills learned in therapy, the nursing staff needs to know the therapy plan of care so they can reinforce the learning, Kann emphasizes. "Therapy and restorative help residents with PD learn to do things in a way that makes a life lot easier for them and their caregivers," he adds.

Examples include:

1. Teaching the resident to get up from a chair on his own by scooting forward and getting his weight forward over the knees and then pushing up. "That strategy encourages the resident to be independent -- and it helps maintain the resident's muscle strength," Kann says.
2. Showing the resident how to turn without losing her balance. "One trick is for the resident to learn not to turn in place," says Kann. "The person should walk in a bit of a circle and turn so she keeps moving and picking up her heels" during the process, Kann advises. That way the person isn't as likely to freeze and fall.