

**“THERE SIMPLY WERE NOT
ENOUGH STAFF TO GO AROUND.
I SAW THIS VERY OLD LADY GET UP AND
FALL ON THE FLOOR...”**

Margaret, Relative

Aged care residents are at a high risk of falls that can cause serious injuries and even death.

The older people get, the more susceptible they become to falls. And the more serious the results of those falls can be. That's why it's important that aged care facilities have enough qualified staff to assess the risk of falls and know both how to minimise the chances of falls occurring and how to care for residents who have suffered from a fall.

THE RISKS OF FALLS IN AGED CARE.

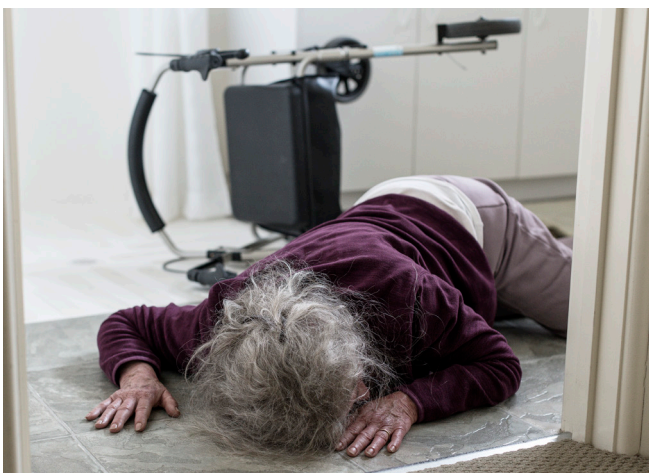
Many people enter aged care when they reach a stage in their life where their mobility is becoming limited, sometimes after a fall at home. So they are already very susceptible to falls and relying more and more on other people to help with the activities of daily living.

The risk becomes even higher if they are taking medications that may affect them in different ways, such as sedatives and anti-depressants. Residents with mental health issues, such as dementia, will also be at higher risk.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN AN OLDER PERSON FALLS?

Because our bodies become more fragile as we age, elderly people are more likely to sustain serious injuries if they have a fall. Skin tears and broken bones are common, and some injuries may even result in death.

Even minor injuries can lead to decreased physical activity, a fear of further falls and a loss of independence. So, having enough qualified staff in aged care to minimise the likelihood of falls is vital to the residents' quality of life.



HOW UNDERSTAFFING IN AGED CARE CAN LEAD TO MORE FALLS.

When an aged care facility lacks qualified nursing staff, it is more likely that a thorough risk assessment will not be made and that early warning signs are missed. Understaffing also makes it impossible for carers to properly monitor the activities of residents when they are out of bed.

Falls also occur when aged care residents with limited mobility attempt to do things for themselves, like walking to the toilet, because the shortage of staff means there is no one available to help them.

HOW TO HELP PREVENT A LOVED ONE HAVING A FALL.

- Request a falls risk assessment by a registered nurse or nurse practitioner
- Ask for a physical assessment by a registered nurse or nurse practitioner
- Encourage the elderly person to take regular exercise to increase their strength and balance and assist where possible.
- Ensure that they have safe footwear and that walking aids, such as frames, are within easy reach.
- Request a review of medicines, especially those that affect their level of awareness.
- Look to see if the facility provides a safe environment.
- Insist on safe staffing levels – this means the right mix of qualified nursing staff and carers and enough staff to be able to monitor all residents, particularly when out of bed. Recent research shows that a safe staffing level should include a skill mix of 30% registered nurses, 20% enrolled nurses and 50% carers.
- Remember, registered nurses have the education to make the initial falls risk assessment and then decide on the best plan for preventing falls. They also have the knowledge and skills to provide emergency treatment and care if a fall does occur.
- Aged care facilities should also provide continuing professional development for nursing staff and carers on the risk factors and prevention of falls.

“UNDERSTAFFING IN AGED CARE CAN LEAD TO RESIDENTS SUFFERING FALLS THAT CAUSE SERIOUS INJURY AND EVEN DEATH.”



WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE SAFETY OF A LOVED ONE.

1. Speak to your facility manager.
2. If you are not satisfied with their actions, make a complaint through the Aged Care Complaints Commissioner at: **agedcarecomplaints.gov.au**
3. Join our campaign and sign our letter to your politician at **timeforruby.anmf.org.au**
4. If you're not already a member, join the ANMF or one of our branches at **anmf.org.au**

Remember, if you are extremely concerned about the safety of residents and the level of care being delivered at your facility, make a complaint to the aged care complaints commissioner immediately. Your complaint can be confidential or anonymous if you have concerns about repercussions or do not wish to be identified.

morestaffforagedcare.com.au