

## Best Practice Guidance from London Ambulance Service (LAS) and the London AT Fast Track Programme

It is important to know what to do when someone falls. Not only so you can help an injured person but to avoid injuring yourself. It is important not to take any unnecessary risks.

If a client falls, avoid moving them until it has been established that the fall has not caused serious injury. If a person is seriously injured call 999 for an ambulance.

Immediately after a fall:

- Do not try to get the person up off the ground straight away. Ask the person to take some deep breaths, relax and place a pillow under the person's head.
- Check for any injuries.

There are no set triage questions, but the following are good triggers :

- Can the person remember how he/she fell?
- Is the person in pain?
- Can the person move their arms and legs?

- Can the person move her/his feet from side to side ?  
A negative response is an indicator of a possible hip injury.
- For those response teams who use the lifting equipment (the inflatable emergency devices ie, the Mangar Elk), the responders have to be competently trained to ensure the successful operation of the equipment.
- If anything changes during the 'assist to lift' /management of person, ie, if the person's recollection of what happened changes, please go back to the first bullet point and repeat the 'trigger' questions. If the recollection is inconsistent/the story has changed, please call the 999 for LAS.

LAS Response to Falls:

Generally, a fall is not a high priority for the LAS (unless its from a height) and are categorised as Green (stable, not at high risk). This means that the response can take up to 2 hours.

- **GREEN** : **2 hours**
- **AMBER** : **19 minutes**
- **RED** : **8 minutes**

As a response is likely to be up to 2 hours, it is important to have as much information as possible about the situation. A response is better than none, but it is important that a responder /individual acts within their own training and competence and therefore not take any risks.

## POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Falls for many older people result in serious injury. Broken hips are one of the most common injuries from falls and can lead to serious disability for many people.
- Most of falls happen in the home (over 80%).
- Never move someone on your own.
- If a fall occurs in a care home, the care home will have a strict policy concerning falls. Just place a pillow under their head, keep calm and call for the nurse in charge.
- Older people may also be reluctant to tell someone that they have fallen and it may only become apparent by accident. Injuries are not always evident straight away. Bruising will not appear for days after a fall or you may notice a person walking with a limp or in discomfort. Even fractures can go undetected for days.
- It is important for the person to see a GP as soon as possible after a fall. Therefore, the LAS are continuously working with organisations and GPs to notify them of fallers and to provide falls related data by local authority. The GP will want to know what happened before the fall, how the person landed and what medications the person is taking. Fear of a fall can be very real for many older people. Sometimes a vulnerable person may restrict movement fearing another fall. Talking to a GP or working with an OT or physiotherapist can help the faller.