General Aging in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Mobility and Aging in Adults with IDD

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What is Mobility?

Mobility is:

- Key to good health, quality of life and independence
- Ability to
  - Get where you want to go
  - Access activities that are meaningful to you
- Moving your body or specific equipment efficiently and effectively to participate in life
Mobility and Aging

- Physical changes may impact a person’s mobility and functioning
- Sensory changes and sensory overload
- Changes in perception, memory and reasoning may also impact mobility
- Some changes occur earlier in some people with intellectual disability
- Due to comorbidities of some syndromes associated with IDD, some adults with IDD are prone to osteoporosis, vision and hearing loss, Alzheimer’s Disease
Signs of Losing Mobility Function

- Loss of balance during routine activities
  - Tripping
  - Difficulty managing stairs
  - Dropping items
- Decreased hand strength
- Decreased ability to move around when lights are dim
- Confusion during common and usual activities, such as cooking
- Coughing, choking, weight loss, wet vocal sounds may be some of the signs of swallowing disorder
Assessing Mobility

- Assess changes in how a person gets around and completes daily activities
- Evaluate emotional well-being
- Specific assessment of muscle tone, muscle strength, motor control and coordination
- Evaluate vision, hearing, touch, smell and taste; as well as cognition and communication
- Assessment of chewing and swallowing by speech therapist
- Get a picture of the whole person’s life – how does any factor or combination of factors impact a person’s ability to function?
Falls in someone who is older can cause serious injury, permanently impair a person’s life, and may cause death.

Causes of falls:
- Physical, sensory or cognitive changes in the person
- Environmental obstacles
- Sensory overload from disorganization, loud noises
What Can Impact Mobility?

- Physical changes in aging impact mobility cardiovascular, decreased flexibility, gait changes, decreased muscle strength and coordination
- Sensory changes – including vision, hearing and vestibular, sensory overload
- Cognitive changes – confusion, forgetting how to complete routine tasks, inability to make decisions
- Some medications can increase risk of falls, dysphagia and other mobility related issues
- Pain and obesity can impact mobility
- Oral disease may contribute to dysphagia
Preventing Loss of Mobility Through Exercise

- Exercise can help prevent and overcome some of the physical changes associated with aging
  - Walking
  - Upper body activities
  - Adapted activities for people who need to remain seated
  - Yoga
  - Schedule activities for when the person is most alert
Maintaining Mobility Through Attention to Diet and Medications

- Good nutrition helps maintain optimal weight, bone health and overall health
- Adapt or avoid certain foods, as needed to choking and aspiration of food into the airway
  - See the webinar on dysphagia at: http://shriver.umassmed.edu/programs/cdder/webinars/dysphagia-aspiration-and-choking
- Evaluate medications for side effects that could impact mobility
Reducing Risk

- Environmental modifications to reduce risk
  - Use good lighting
  - Install physical aids, such as rails or assistive devices (walkers, canes)
  - Remove clutter or obstacles, especially area rugs, cords, spills, and poorly placed furniture
  - Modifications in bathrooms
  - Clear visual aides to help people navigate their environment or complete tasks
  - Well-fitted shoes and clothing

Source: CDC
Support the Person to Reduce Risk

- Take time to observe and notice when changes occur and what may be going on
- Slow things down and observe the reaction to change in pace
- Break down tasks into manageable chunks
- Provide visual supports, for example:
  - Schedules
  - Instructions
- Provide options to help maintain a sense of self and control
Take Away on Maintaining Mobility Function

- Keep active
- Make this a goal starting now, not later
- Support participation in activities that promote overall physical, cognitive and emotional well-being
Additional Webinars on Aging with IDD

General Aging in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
- Understanding Age Related Changes
- The Role of Polypharmacy
- Identifying and Assessing Pain
- Behavior Related Changes and Aging in Adults with IDD
- Health Promotion and Aging in Adults with IDD
- Mobility and Aging in Adults with IDD
- Aging with Down Syndrome
- Aging and Cerebral Palsy

Dementia and Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
- Introduction to Dementia and Aging with IDD
- Early Evaluation of Dementia and Alzheimer’s Disease
- Stages of Alzheimer’s Disease
- Applying the Knowledge to Dementia Caregiving and Caregiver Support
- Caregiving in Action: Case Studies and Practical Tips
Additional Aging with IDD Resources

Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services (DDS)

Center for Developmental Disabilities Evaluation & Research
http://shriver.umassmed.edu/cdder/aging_idd_education
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