

Gerryatric Musings

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Hip Protectors - Do They Really Help?

There is a recent Cochrane update regarding this issue. I refer you to their web-site to read the review. The bottom line is maybe!! This is a reprint of their summary - I didn't think I could say it any better.

What are hip protectors?

Older people living in nursing care facilities or older adults living at home are at high risk of falling and a hip fracture may occur after a fall. Hip protectors are plastic shields (hard) or foam pads (soft), usually fitted in pockets in specially designed underwear. They are worn to cushion a sideways fall on the hip.

Do they prevent hip fractures?

We conducted a review of the effect of hip protectors to prevent hip fractures. We searched for all relevant studies up to December 2012. We found 19 studies with about 17,000 people who were around 80 years old.

Overall, there was moderate quality evidence from these studies for the following results.

In older people living in nursing care facilities, providing a hip protector:

- Probably decreases the chance of a hip fracture slightly
- May increase the small chance of a pelvic fracture slightly
- Probably has little or no effect on other fractures or falls

In older people living at home, providing a hip protector:

- Probably has little or no effect on hip fractures

When wearing the hip protectors very few people had side effects, such as skin irritation. However, people often did not wear the hip protectors when they were provided. Better understanding is needed of the personal and design factors that may influence acceptance and adherence.

Read more at: <http://summaries.cochrane.org/CD001255/hip-protectors-for-preventing-hip-fractures-in-older-people#sthash.3INGPs0O.dpuf>.