

Severe foot pain linked to recurrent falls

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Researchers from Hebrew Senior Life's Institute for Aging Research have discovered that foot pain - particularly severe foot pain - correlates to a higher incidence of recurrent falls. This finding also extends to those diagnosed with planus foot posture (flat feet), indicating that both foot pain and foot posture may play a role in falls among older adults.

Using data from the Framingham Foot study, researchers found that [foot pain](#) and [foot](#) posture were not associated with any one fall; however, in the case of multiple falls, foot pain and foot posture were often a factor. These findings were published today in the journal *Gerontology*.

"We know that having more than one fall can be of concern. Many don't think of feet as the culprit. However, higher odds of recurrent falls were seen for those with foot pain, especially severe foot pain, as well as those with planus foot posture, indicating that both foot pain and foot posture may play a role in falls," said Marian Hannan, Co-Director of the Musculoskeletal Research Center at the Institute for Aging Research and Associate Professor of Public Health, Harvard School of Public Health.

"This is important because falls are a serious problem for older adults. They are a leading cause of hospitalization and often lead to a loss of independence, a decrease in quality of life, and sometimes death. With this new knowledge we hope to find more solutions to lessen the risk of falls in older adults," said Lead author Arunima Awale, Research Associate at Hebrew Senior Life's Institute for Aging Research.

More than 30 percent of individuals over the age of 65 fall at least once a year. This figure increases to over 40% for persons aged 75 years or older. As a result of this study, scientists are hopeful that by lessening the instance of foot [pain](#) in [older adults](#) they can significantly reduce hospitalizations and loss of independence for American seniors.

More information: Arunima Awale et al, Foot Function, Foot Pain, and Falls in Older Adults: The Framingham Foot Study, *Gerontology* (2017). [DOI: 10.1159/000475710](https://doi.org/10.1159/000475710)

Provided by Hebrew SeniorLife Institute for Aging Research

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