

Covid-19, domestic accidents of older adults

Press release from the National Academy of Medicine

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Domestic accidents are responsible for 20,000 deaths a year in France, two-thirds of which concern people over 75. In this period of confinement, increased attention is essential to limit their number and consequences. Confinement increases the risk of accidents among the elderly, especially if they have limited mobility, cognitive decline or sensory impairment, sometimes living alone in homes unsuited to their physical condition.

Preventing the two major causes of domestic accidents (falls and poisoning) is the responsibility of patients, their families and carers at home or in institutions.

- 1. Falls:** every year in France, 400,000 falls of the elderly are recorded, causing 12,000 deaths. The vast majority occur at home, one out of two times in the toilet or bathroom.

In this period of confinement, the Academy of Medicine reminds us of the need to observe the essential measures for the prevention of falls at home :

- Wear slippers or adapted shoes (with counterfoot and non-slip);
- Take care to tidy up the rooms and do not obstruct the traffic routes with obstacles on the ground (carpets, electric cables, plants...) in the apartment as well as in the garden;
- Place a seat and a non-slip mat in the shower or bathtub;
- Ensure good lighting in all rooms and add a night light;
- Avoid climbing on a stool, chair or stepladder;
- In case of a fall that does not cause serious injury, follow these tips:
 - o Lying on your back, tilt your body to the side and bring the opposite arm,
 - o in lateral support, bring one leg up,
 - o lean on both elbows and on the bent knee,
 - o crawl on all fours and reach a stable support (chair, table or radiator),
 - o with the help of this support, get up smoothly.
- For those with a remote assistance device, alert the service providers.

- 2. Poisonings** may be linked to various products, including medicines and household products. For people who are taking multiple medications, treatment errors are possible due to visual disturbances or temporary confusion. In this period of

confinement, the most frequent intoxications are related to self-medication and the untimely use of bleach or other disinfectants, acids or ammonia, particularly for washing food.

In this period of confinement, the Academy of Medicine recalls the rules for the prevention of drug intoxication :

- Write the dosage on the medicine boxes, specifying the name of the medicine prescribed if it is a generic:
- Leave tablet blister packs in their original packaging, or use a pill dispenser;
- Never self-medicate or take medication on the advice of a non-physician or pharmacist;
- Respect the dosage and number of doses indicated by the doctor;
- Do not use medicines that have passed their expiry date and, if possible, return them to the pharmacy.