

## Stiff Legs and Serious Accidents

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### Perspective

The stiff legs syndrome, which I detected and described, provokes on one or both legs pain and a slow but total, albeit temporary, loss of sensibility, motility and postural reflex. When standing up after being seated for a long time on the toilet bowl, an elderly person might suffer a postural instability -an objective and visible/verifiable condition, which is characterized by an incapability to maintain his balance while being in an upright position or walking. This instability is due to a functional alteration of one or more mechanisms that cooperate in controlling a person's balance within a highly integrated system of venous and vascular channels.

Postural stability alterations, both in static and dynamic conditions, along with an increase of postural oscillations in an antero-posterior direction (originating from a number of involuntional modifications of organs and apparatuses) at times make it impossible to assume an upright position and/or to maintain it. Thus, as soon as the person tries to stand upright he falls, since his muscular system does not support him. Often enough, slippery floors or other contingent causes are mistakenly believed to be the causes of such accidents.

The problem of domestic accidents in the bathroom is an ever more frequent feature of present day society with its increasingly elderly population, especially among persons who are over 70, or obese (indeed, being overweight makes this syndrome even more complicated).

In North-European countries, in particular in Sweden, the bathrooms for elderly people are equipped with handholds in front of the toilet bowl, so that especially those suffering from constipation or from lazy/slow bowels can regain their postural stability by holding fast to the handhold. Without this fixture, they would lose their balance and fall with disastrous consequences -i.e., fracture of the limbs or of the pelvis.

In Italy a research made on domestic accidents occurred to elderly people also highlighted a high incidence of such events.

Studies conducted on the causes of fractures suffered by elderly people in their bathroom (an extremely relevant clinical occurrence, as it is among the major causes of serious disability/handicap, long periods of hospitalization and death) should be widely diffused and brought to public attention by all mass-media, so as to curb and prevent these very serious accidents.

Studies are presently under way on a device for minimizing the harmful effects of this syndrome, which involves the central nervous system (afferent and effector nervous channels) and the arterial and venous vascular systems.

In conclusion, in order to prevent bathroom accidents it is advisable to install a handhold in front of the toilet bowl, in addition to adopting all the other security measures.