

'Smart' device to help elderly people avoid falls

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A group of Stanford University students is developing a vibrating ankle brace designed to assist elderly people in avoiding falls.

The "smart" brace is fitted with a tiny chip that continuously monitors the position of the wearer's ankle, CNN said. If the chip detects a roll greater than normal, it vibrates, thereby sending a signal to the wearer's brain that they must change the position of their foot or shift their balance in order to avoid a fall.

The students -- Tim Ramsey, Ryan McDonnell, Buzzy Bonneau, Tejas Mazmudar, Jeremy Dittmer and Surag Mantri -- told CNN they wanted to develop something that would detect a body's position in relation to its surroundings -- a sense that decreases as people age. They wanted their device to be more discreet than current devices used to prevent falls, such as walkers and canes.

The students are participating in the California school's Biodesign Innovation Program. Officials said the design is in its preliminary stages.

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