

Preventing Falls

What is my main problem?

I am at risk for falling which could cause injury. Many medical conditions put people at higher risk for falls. I have one of these conditions, or maybe something different puts me at risk:

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Two or more falls in the past six months | <input type="checkbox"/> Decrease in muscle strength |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vision loss | <input type="checkbox"/> High or low blood pressure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Foot pain or shoe problems | <input type="checkbox"/> Changes in urine or bowel habits |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medications that may make me dizzy, drowsy, or cause low blood pressure | <input type="checkbox"/> Depression |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Problem with walking or balancing | <input type="checkbox"/> Dizziness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recent surgery | <input type="checkbox"/> New environment |

What do I need to do?

I need to look for things in my home that may cause a fall, and make my home safer. Some things to check:

Lights:

- Use good lighting. Have light switches within easy reach.
- Keep a small night light on in case you need to get up at night.
- Replace burned out bulbs. Lampshades or frosted bulbs can reduce glare.

Stairs:

- Use handrails on both sides of the stairs. Make sure handrails are tight and as long as the stairs.
- Fix loose or uneven steps.
- If the stairs have carpet, make sure it is firmly attached to each step. If the stairs are not carpet, attach non-slip rubber treads on the stairs.
- Paint a different color on the top front edge of each step.

Floors:

- Use nonskid mats, especially on floors that may get wet.
- Remove small rugs. Tack down the edges of rugs.
- Repair or remove torn or loose carpet.
- Remove cords or wires on the floor.
- Remove clutter.
- Do not use floor wax.
- Clean up spills right away.

Furniture:

- Arrange furniture so that it is not in the way.
- Have furniture at the proper height to make it easy to get in and out.
- Have furniture that is sturdy and gives support.
- Do not use furniture polish spray. Spray that gets on the floor may make floors slippery.

Bedroom:

- Place a lamp, flashlight, and batteries where they can be reached from the bed.
- Keep bed at proper height to make it easier to get in and out.
- Use non-skid slippers with closed backs.
- Sit at the edge of the bed for a few minutes before standing up.

Bathroom:

- Install grab bars in the tub, shower and around the toilet.
- Use non-skid mats in tub, shower and floor.
- Keep towels and equipment in reach.
- Consider using an elevated toilet seat and a tub bench.
- Use handheld shower nozzle.

Kitchen:

- Keep frequently used items at the front of cupboards or drawers.
- Have stove controls within easy reach.

Storage:

- Store food and regularly used items where they can be found easily. Avoid reaching for items.
- Use a steady step stool with a hand bar if you must reach high. Never use a chair as a step stool.

Outdoors:

- Repair cracked sidewalks.
- Trim shrubs along path to home.
- Install good lighting by doorways and path to doors.

Telephone:

- Keep the phone within easy reach at all times.
- Keep emergency numbers in large print near each phone.
- Put a phone near the floor in case you fall and can't get up.

Clothing and shoes:

- Do not wear clothing that is long enough to trip over.
- Wear shoes or non-skid slippers with closed backs and good support.
- Do not wear shoes with thick soles.

Children and Pets:

- Watch for children and pets underfoot.
- Watch for toys or spilled pet food.

Diet and Exercise:

- Drink enough liquids to prevent dizziness.
- Eat a diet rich in calcium and vitamin D to keep bones strong.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Exercise can increase muscle strength, balance and coordination. Some examples might be walking, water aerobics and Tai Chi.

Preventive Health:

- Consider wearing a device that will bring help in case I fall.
- Have my eyes checked every year.
- Talk with a doctor or pharmacist about medicine side effects that may increase risk for falls.
- Take care of my feet. Foot pain or other foot problems can lead to a fall.
- Use a walker or cane when moving around.

Why is this important to me?

At least half of all falls happen at home. Each year, thousands of people are seriously hurt, disabled, or die from a fall. I can take these simple steps to make my home safer so I do not fall.