



Fall Prevention

prevent falls
and
enjoy your
independence
every day!

**Fall-related hip fractures
and deaths are increasing.**

**Don't let yourself
become a statistic!**

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Do you know that for people 65 years and older:

- ▶ One-third fall every year.
- ▶ Falls are the most common cause of injuries and hospital admissions for trauma.
- ▶ Almost 90 percent of all fractures are due to falls.
- ▶ Almost ALL hip fractures are caused by falls – and half of these patients cannot return home or live independently after their injury.
- ▶ Accidents due to falls are the fifth leading cause of death.
- ▶ Two-thirds of these deaths from falls are preventable.
- ▶ The major causes of falls are environmental, medical conditions and medications.

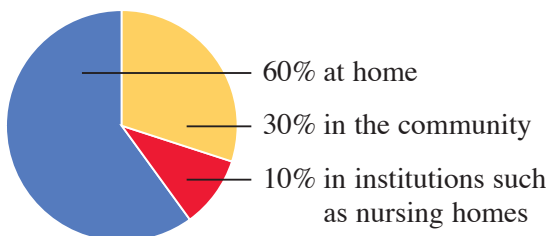


These statistics and most of the information within this brochure have been compiled from the US Dept. of Health & Human Services, US Public Health Service, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC), Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Osteoporosis Foundation, National Institute on Aging (NIA), and the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons.

Who is most likely to fall?

- ▶ Older women—especially Caucasians and Asians
- ▶ Seniors unable to stand on one leg for more than five seconds
- ▶ People who take four or more prescriptions and over-the-counter drugs
- ▶ Seniors who live alone
- ▶ Seniors having more than one chronic disease
- ▶ People who have had a stroke
- ▶ Seniors who have urinary incontinence

Where are falls most likely to occur?



How Do You Prevent Falls?

Don't let yourself become another statistic. Falls are not natural occurrences. Protect yourself and your future health and wellbeing by preventing falls before they happen.

The following are simple guidelines on how you can reduce your risk of falling.

1. Exercise Regularly

Exercise reduces your chances of falling by improving your strength, coordination, balance, and flexibility. The most beneficial exercises improve your balance and coordination. Tai Chi has been shown to signifi-



cantly cut the risk of falls among older adults by improving balance and body awareness through slow and precise body movements.

Health professionals now believe that balance is the most important aspect of aging gracefully. Lack of balance has numerous causes: vision and inner ear problems, bad posture, osteoporosis, poor diet, certain medications and physical weakness. Weak leg muscles are often the single best predictor of balance.

Recommended exercises includes other forms of martial arts, yoga, dancing, walking, swimming and stretching. Engage in regular, moderate amounts of physical activity. Ask your physician or healthcare professional to recommend an exercise program for you to follow.

Remember that lack of exercise leads to weakness and increases your chances of falling.

2. Eat Nutritious Foods

Calcium and vitamin D are critical to maintain healthy bones. Adequate intake of both is important to prevent bone loss and reduce the risk of hip fracture. Healthcare professionals recommend taking 1,200 to 1,500 mgs of calcium daily and 600 to 800 mgs of vitamin D daily.



Eat breakfast every morning. Skipping a meal could make you lightheaded and dizzy.

Avoid excessive alcohol intake and do not smoke.

Ask your physician or healthcare professional to test you for osteoporosis. Reduced bone density can dramatically increase your risk of a serious fall.

3. Review Your Medicines

Consult with your physician or pharmacist. Review all of the prescriptions and over-the-counter medicines that you take. Medications (including tranquilizers, sleeping pills, hypnotics, antidepressants and blood pressure medications) can lead to falls by making you drowsy, dizzy, lightheaded, disoriented, nervous and incontinent or have diarrhea.



4. Check Your Vision

- ▶ Visit an eye doctor regularly to have your eyes checked. Poor vision can increase your chances of falling. By getting an annual eye exam you will find out if you are wearing the wrong glasses or have a condition such as glaucoma or cataracts that limits your vision. And remember to remove your reading glasses before you walk.



5. Daily Safety Tips

- ▶ Every morning when you first wake up, sit on the edge of the bed and make sure you are not dizzy before you get out of bed. Sudden changes in blood pressure when standing up may lead to a fall.
- ▶ Be careful around pets. They can get in front of your feet or jump on you and throw you off balance.
- ▶ Use a cane or walker if you are unsteady when walking. If their rubber tips become worn, replace them immediately.
- ▶ Wear clothes and shoes that fit you properly. You can trip on a coat, pair of pants or bathrobe that is too long. Don't wear slippers or athletic shoes with thick, soft soles in the house. Wear shoes that give you good support and have thin non-slip soles.
- ▶ Don't rush to answer the telephone. Fast movements can throw you off balance and result in a fall.



Make Your Home Safe

General Safety Tips:

- ▶ Remove small throw rugs or use double-sided tape to keep the rugs from slipping.
- ▶ Remove objects from the floor that you can trip over, such as newspapers, books, clothes, and shoes.
- ▶ Increase the lighting in your home. As you age you need brighter lights to see well. Install lighted light switches at the entrances to all rooms to prevent stumbling in the dark when searching for one.
- ▶ Keep items you use often in cabinets that you can reach easily without having to use a step stool.
- ▶ Immediately clean up puddles of water on the kitchen or bathroom floor.
- ▶ Move all electric, appliance and telephone cords out of walk ways and do NOT hide cords under a rug.
- ▶ Do not sit in a chair or on a sofa that is so low it is difficult for you to stand up without losing your balance.
- ▶ Practice the habit of closing all cabinets and drawers so you won't trip over them and fall.



Steps and Stairs:

- ▶ Install light switches at both the top and bottom of the stairs. One option is to use motion detector lights that will turn on automatically and light your steps and stairs.
- ▶ Install handrails on both sides and keep at least one hand on the handrail at all times.
- ▶ Do not leave objects on the steps or stairs.
- ▶ Never carry something that obstructs your view of the next step.
- ▶ Use non-slip treads on wood steps and stairs.
- ▶ Do not use patterned, dark or deep-pile carpeting. Solid colors show the edges of steps more clearly.
- ▶ Do not place loose area rugs at the bottom or top of stairs.



Bathroom Safety:

- ▶ Never grab a towel rack, shampoo holder or soap tray for support in the shower.
- ▶ Install grab bars beside the toilet, inside the shower and above the bathtub.
- ▶ Use a nonskid mat or adhesive strips in the bathtub and on the shower floor.
- ▶ Use a slip-resistant rug in front of the bathtub to prevent slipping when entering and exiting.



- ▶ Mount a liquid soap dispenser on the bathtub or shower wall to avoid bending over in search of the soap and losing your balance.
- ▶ If you are unsteady, use an elevated toilet seat with handles and a bath seat with a handheld shower.
- ▶ Replace non-safety glass shower doors and panels with tempered safety glass.
- ▶ Never lock the bathroom door. You could prevent help from reaching you immediately in case you did fall.



Bedroom Safety

- ▶ Keep a telephone, lamp and flashlight beside your bed.
- ▶ Install nightlights in-between your bedroom and bathroom and keep the path clear of furniture or clothing on the floor.
- ▶ Sleep on a bed that is easy to get in and out of.
- ▶ Replace satiny sheets and comforters with products made of non-slippery material such as cotton or wool.



Kitchen

- ▶ Remove any throw rugs and use non-skid floor wax.
- ▶ Keep your food, dishes and cooking utensils in easily accessible cabinets and drawers, i.e., waist-high level.
- ▶ Do NOT stand on chairs reach upper cabinets. If necessary, use a step stool that has an attached handrail to provide support.
- ▶ Repair any loose flooring.



Products that help maintain your stability:



Canes

When all you need to use is a one-handed walking aid to maintain your stability.

Rolling Walker

Stay mobile indoors and outdoors when your legs alone cannot support you by transferring your weight to your arms and hands.



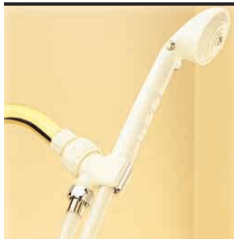


Transport Wheelchair

Stay mobile even when you tire easily or can no longer walk unsupported by having someone take you for a ride.

Bath Seat

Sit while showering to reduce your risk of losing your balance and falling.



Handheld Shower

Eliminate getting up and down to control the water when showering using a bath seat.

Elevated Toilet Seat

Eliminate any problems getting up or down from your regular toilet at home.



Grab Bars

Provide stability and assistance when using the toilet or getting into and out of the bath or shower.

Non-Slip Tub Mat

Ensure safe footing when entering or exiting the tub or shower.



**For further information on
preventing falls please contact:**

National Center for Injury Prevention and Control
(NCIPC)
770 488-1506
www.cdc.gov/ncipc

Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
800 311-3435
www.cdc.gov

National Institute on Aging (NIA)
301-496-1752
www.nih.gov/nia

American Association of Retired People (AARP)
800-424-3410
www.aarp.org

National Osteoporosis Foundation
202 223-2226
www.nof.org

American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons
800 824-BONES
www.aos.org

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