

Fall Prevention for Adults

Falls are a leading cause of traumatic brain injury. You can fall and injury your head at any age, but as we get older, the likelihood of falling increases. This resource has tips for maintaining a healthy lifestyle and keeping your home safe to help prevent falls.

Tips for Healthy Living

Exercise:

- Improves balance, helps keep your joints, tendons, and ligaments flexible, improves muscle tone, and increases strength.
- Walking or climbing stairs can help strengthen your joints and bones.
- Yoga and Tai Chi are great ways to improve coordination and balance.

Nutrition:

- Protein is needed (along with regular exercise) to keep your muscles strong.
- Vitamin D in your diet benefits bones and helps maintain strength and lower body function.
- Iron is an important part of your diet. Even without anemia, iron deficiencies can sometimes cause dizziness, increasing your chances of falling.

Review Medications:

- Medication side effects may cause dizziness, drowsiness, and problems that can cause falls.
- Talk with your doctor or pharmacist about side effects and interactions of all your medicines, including prescriptions, over-the-counter medicines, vitamins and herbal supplements.

Tips for Home Safety

All Living Spaces:

- Put a phone in each level of the home with emergency numbers attached.
- Secure cords and wires by coiling or taping them next to the walls to avoid tripping.
- Check lighting for adequate illumination and glare control.
- Use contrast in paint, furniture and carpet colors to signal changes in surface types or levels.
- Install electronic emergency response system if needed.

- Select furniture with armrests for support in getting up and down.
- Wear sturdy, rubber-soled, low-heeled shoes. Wearing only socks or shoes with smooth soles on stairs or waxed floors can be unsafe.
- Use mobility aids such as canes, walkers, and wheelchairs.

Floors:

- Remove any throw rugs or use double-sided tape or a non-slip backing so rugs won't slip.
- Remove books, clothes, shoes, blankets, papers, or other objects from the floor.

Stairs and Steps:

- Remove clutter from the stairs.
- Have loose or uneven steps fixed.
- Make sure the stairway has adequate lighting.
- Add light switches at both the top and bottom of the stairs.
- Fix loose handrails or have new ones put in.
- If the stairs are carpeted make sure the carpet is firmly attached to every step.

Bedrooms:

- Place a lamp within easy reach from the bed.
- Make sure your pathway from the bed to the bathroom is well lit.
- Keep your telephone near the bed.
- Adjust the height of the bed so that it is easy to get in and out of.
- Have a firm chair with armrests to sit and dress in.

Bathrooms:

- Place non-slip mats or self-stick strips in the bathtub and on the shower floors.
- Have grab bars installed inside and outside the tub / shower and next to the toilet.
- If needed, add a bath or shower seat.
- If needed, install a raised toilet seat.

Kitchen:

- Keep items you use often on lower shelves (counter level) to avoid using a step stool.
- Do not use a chair as a step stool. If you need something up high, use a step stool with a bar.
- Wipe up spills immediately, sweep often.
- To reduce slick surfaces, avoid using floor polish or wax.

Porch, Yard, Outside:

- Install lights following paths or overhead lights. Sensor lights (“motion lights”) mounted on the house or garage are helpful because they turn on and off automatically.
- Keep walk areas clear of clutter, rocks, weeds, and tools. Trim shrubbery along pathways.
- Repair cracks and abrupt edges of sidewalks and driveways.

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