

# TIPS FOR PREVENTING FALLS



## Fast fall facts

- A fall is one of the most common events threatening the independence of older adults.
- One in three adults over 65 reports falling in the previous year.
- A “fall” occurs any time a person comes to rest inadvertently on or near the ground or a lower level.

## Who is at risk of falling?

- Anyone who has fallen before.
- Anyone with weak leg muscles.
- Anyone who has problems with walking or balance.
- Those age 65 and older.

## What can happen if you fall?

You can develop bruises or break bones, such as a broken hip. Sometimes falls cause life-threatening injuries, like head injuries.

## What can I do to prevent a fall?

- Get up slowly when you are sitting or lying down.
- Be careful when wearing your multi-focal glasses when walking. Do not wear them while going up or down stairs.
- Wear shoes that have low heels, close well (such as with laces or Velcro) and have nonslip soles. Don't walk around in slippers, backless shoes or barefoot.

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## What can I do at my home to prevent falls?

- Remove rugs, or make sure they don't move by using double-sided tape or nonslip backing.
- Remove clutter and other objects that you could trip on, like cords or wires, from walkways.
- Turn on the lights in hallways and stairways.
- Be sure the handrails are attached well on both sides of all stairways.
- Move items you can't reach to lower shelves and cabinets.
- Use step stools that are steady and have railings to hold onto.
- Put a nonslip rubber mat in the bathtub.
- Install handrails in the bathtub and near the toilet.
- Be sure to look around you. Even your pet can be a tripping hazard.
- Consider using a personal emergency response system. These systems alert first-responders if you fall or are injured. This is especially important if you live alone.

## Talk to your doctor

- Tell your doctor if you have had a fall in the past, even if you were not hurt.
- Tell your doctor if you are having problems with your balance or walking, if you have leg weakness or if you worry about falling.
- Ask your doctor for a referral to a physical therapist to ensure you are using your cane or walker the right way.
- Ask your doctor if you can join an exercise program to benefit your strength and balance.
- Ask your doctor to review your medicines, including over-the-counter medicines. Some, like sleeping pills and pain pills, can make you dizzy or drowsy, increasing your risk of falls.
- Ask your doctor if you need to get a DEXA scan to assess bone density.
- Ask your doctor if you need a check of your Vitamin D level.

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## Resources

- Classes and workshops: [Sanford Center for Aging Wellness programs](#), senior centers, YMCAs, hospitals and your local Council on Aging.
- Home safety assessment: The Continuum, [continuumreno.com](http://continuumreno.com) or [info@continuumreno.com](mailto:info@continuumreno.com)
- NCOA (National Council on Aging) website for evidence-based fitness programs: [tinyurl.com/ncoa-senior-exercise](http://tinyurl.com/ncoa-senior-exercise)
- National Institute on Aging: Go4Life Information: [nia.nih.gov/health/exercise-physical-activity](http://nia.nih.gov/health/exercise-physical-activity)

## References

- American Academy of Family Physicians (2017) Patient Information Resource - [Falls: How to Lower Your Risk](#)
- American Academy of Family Physicians (2019) [Preventing Falls in Older Persons](#)

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