

What can you do to Prevent Falls?

Falls usually happen because of the combined effects of a number of factors, such as loss of balance, slow reflexes, side effects of medicine, impaired mobility or vision, and environmental hazards.

Facts about Falling

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ Every year one-third of people aged 65 years and over fall at least once ✚ Half of falls occur in a person's home while doing usual daily activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ Half of those who fall and fracture a hip never regain their pre-fall level of functioning ✚ Older adults who have already experienced a fall are at risk for more falls | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ Older adults may develop a "fear of falling" causing them to limit their activities which can increase risk of falling due to weak muscles, stiff joints and poor balance |
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Simple home modifications and exercises that improve strength and balance can help reduce the risk of falling.

How to Reduce Risk of Falling

Important Tips

- ✚ Exercise regularly to improve strength and balance
- ✚ Lack of exercise leads to weakness and increases your chance of falling
- ✚ Talk to your healthcare provider about the most appropriate walking aids and safety devices
- ✚ Have hearing & vision checked yearly; poor vision can increase risk of falling, inner ear problems can affect balance
- ✚ Have your doctor review your medications, some drugs can make you drowsy, dizzy and unsteady
- ✚ Eat a balanced diet and drink plenty of water
- ✚ Limit alcohol intake as this impairs your balance and judgement
- ✚ Sit on the edge of your bed for a minute before getting up after a rest
- ✚ Be socially active by getting together with friends or family and joining a community group
- ✚ Consider using a personal alarm device that you wear to call for help

General Home Safety

- ✚ Wear shoes inside your home, avoid walking in socking feet
- ✚ Remove things you can trip over; clutter, electrical cords, throw rugs
- ✚ Improve lighting in home; night lights in bedroom and bathroom, light switches at both ends of stairs, lamp beside bed you can easily reach
- ✚ Have grab bars next to toilet and tub/shower
- ✚ Consider using a bath seat to bathe and a raised toilet seat
- ✚ Keep items you use often in easy-to-reach location
- ✚ Do not stand on chair/stool to reach things – ask for help
- ✚ Watch that your pets are not under foot, put a bell on their collar so you know where they are
- ✚ Make sure there are solid handrails on stairs, never rush up and down stairs
- ✚ Clean up spills immediately
- ✚ Avoid rushing or carrying too much
- ✚ Clear snow and ice from entrances

Fall Prevention: Footwear and Foot Care

Our feet are very important. As we grow older, our feet can change and have less feeling and movement. These changes can affect our walking and can put us off balance. Wearing shoes that are good for your feet can help prevent you from having a fall. Wearing shoes or slippers that are wrong for your feet may actually put you at greater risk of having a trip and fall.

What makes a 'good' shoe?:

Firm heel counter
keeps foot stable
when turning

Low, wide heels
have more contact
with the ground
and prevent
slipping.



Laces or Velcro® keep
your heels from slipping
and help with support.

**Wide and deep toe
box** allows room for
toes and comfort

Rubber or crepe soles with tread
help prevent slipping, and provide
some shock absorption when
walking

Tips for buying shoes:

- Make sure the sole has a good grip and is not slippery.
- Try on both shoes and walk around the store – make sure the shoes fit well and feel comfortable right away.
- Try on shoes with your regular socks.
- Shop for shoes later in the day – feet tend to swell during the day and it is best to be fitted when feet are at their largest.
- Bring your orthotics or insoles with you
- Ask your Occupational Therapist or Chiropodist about specialist shoe stores if you have problems finding the right shoes.
- Wear supportive shoes in your home. Do not walk barefoot or just in slippery socks.

Other foot care tips:

- Visit your doctor or care provider if you have painful or swollen feet, tingling or pins and needles in your feet, or if there are any changes to the shape of your feet (ex. Bunions, hammertoes).
- Ask a physiotherapist about exercises to help strengthen your feet and ankles.
- If the feeling in your feet (sensation) is poor, make sure to check your feet every day for calluses, sores, or thickened nails and visit your doctor or care provider if you have problems.