



Many falls can be prevented. By making some changes, you can lower your chances of falling.

Four things YOU can do to prevent falls:

- 1 Begin a regular exercise program
- 2 Have your health care provider review your medicines
- 3 Have your vision checked
- 4 Make your home safer

“We feel stronger when we walk frequently. And we have a more positive outlook.”

What YOU Can Do



To Prevent Falls

CDC FOUNDATION
MetLife Foundation



Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

For more information, contact:
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
770-488-1506
www.cdc.gov/injury

CDC FOUNDATION
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Four things YOU can do to prevent falls:

1 Begin a regular exercise program

Exercise is one of the most important ways to lower your chances of falling. It makes you stronger and helps you feel better. Exercises that improve balance and coordination (like Tai Chi) are the most helpful.

Lack of exercise leads to weakness and increases your chances of falling.

Ask your doctor or health care provider about the best type of exercise program for you.

2 Have your health care provider review your medicines

Have your doctor or pharmacist review all the medicines you take, even over-the-counter medicines. As you get older, the way medicines work in your body can change. Some medicines, or combinations of medicines, can make you sleepy or dizzy and can cause you to fall.

3 Have your vision checked

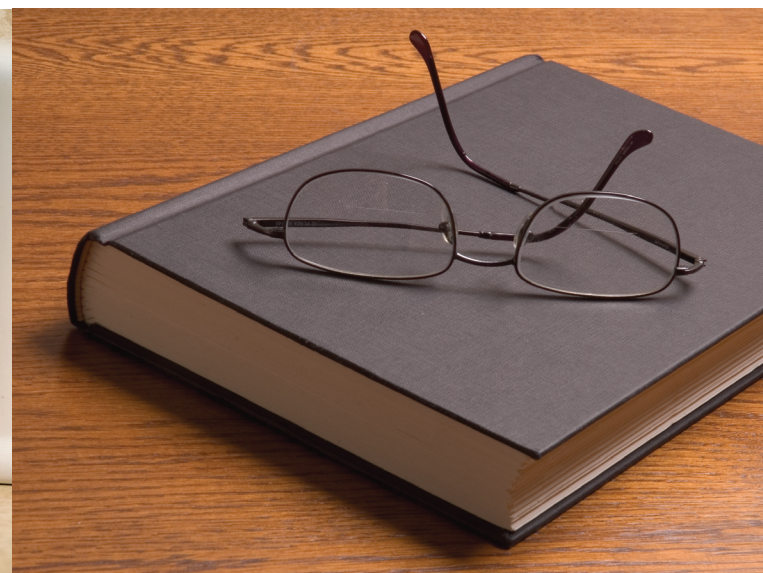
Have your eyes checked by an eye doctor at least once a year. You may be wearing the wrong glasses or have a condition like glaucoma or cataracts that limits your vision. Poor vision can increase your chances of falling.

4 Make your home safer

About half of all falls happen at home. To make your home safer:

- Remove things you can trip over (like papers, books, clothes, and shoes) from stairs and places where you walk.
- Remove small throw rugs or use double-sided tape to keep the rugs from slipping.
- Keep items you use often in cabinets you can reach easily without using a step stool.
- Have grab bars put in next to your toilet and in the tub or shower.
- Use non-slip mats in the bathtub and on shower floors.
- Improve the lighting in your home. As you get older, you need brighter lights to see well. Hang light-weight curtains or shades to reduce glare.
- Have handrails and lights put in on all staircases.
- Wear shoes both inside and outside the house. Avoid going barefoot or wearing slippers.

“I thought I was too old to learn Tai Chi. But I enjoy the classes and my balance is much better.”



CHECK FOR SAFETY

A Home Fall Prevention Checklist for Older Adults



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Injury Prevention and Control



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Falls at Home

Each year, thousands of older Americans fall at home. Many of them are seriously injured, and some are disabled. In 1996, more than 8,500 people over age 65 died because of falls.

Falls are often due to hazards that are easy to overlook but easy to fix. This checklist will help you find and fix those hazards in your home.

The checklist asks about hazards found in each room of your home. For each hazard, the checklist tells you how to fix the problem. At the end of the checklist, you will find other tips for preventing falls.

Floors

Look at the floor in each room.

Q. When you walk through a room, do you have to walk around furniture?

Ask someone to move the furniture so your path is clear.

Q. Do you have throw rugs on the floor?

Remove the rugs or use double-sided tape or a non-slip backing so the rugs won't slip.

Q. Are papers, magazines, books, shoes, boxes, blankets, towels, or other objects on the floor?

Pick up things that are on the floor. Always keep objects off the floor.

Q. Do you have to walk over or around cords or wires (like cords from lamps, extension cords, or telephone cords)?

Coil or tape cords and wires next to the wall so you can't trip over them. Have an electrician put in another outlet.



Stairs and Steps

Look at the stairs you use both inside and outside your home.

Q. Are papers, shoes, books, or other objects on the stairs?

Pick up things on the stairs. Always keep objects off the stairs.

Q. Are some steps broken or uneven?

Fix loose or uneven steps.

Q. Are you missing a light over the stairway?

Have a handyman or an electrician put in an overhead light at the top and bottom of the stairs.

Q. Has the stairway light bulb burned out?

Have a friend or family member change the light bulb.

Q. Do you have only one light switch for your stairs (only at the top or at the bottom of the stairs)?

Have a handyman or an electrician put in a light switch at the top and bottom of the stairs. You can get light switches that glow.



Q. Are the handrails loose or broken?
Is there a handrail on only one
side of the stairs?

Fix loose handrails or put in new ones. Make sure handrails are on both sides of the stairs and are as long as the stairs.



Q. Is the carpet on the steps loose
or torn?

Make sure the carpet is firmly attached to every step or remove the carpet and attach non-slip rubber treads on the stairs.

Kitchen

Look at your kitchen and eating area.

Q. Are the things you use often on high shelves?

- Move items in your cabinets. Keep things you use often on the lower shelves (about waist high).

Q. Is your step stool unsteady?

- Get a new, steady step stool with a bar to hold on to. Never use a chair as a step stool.

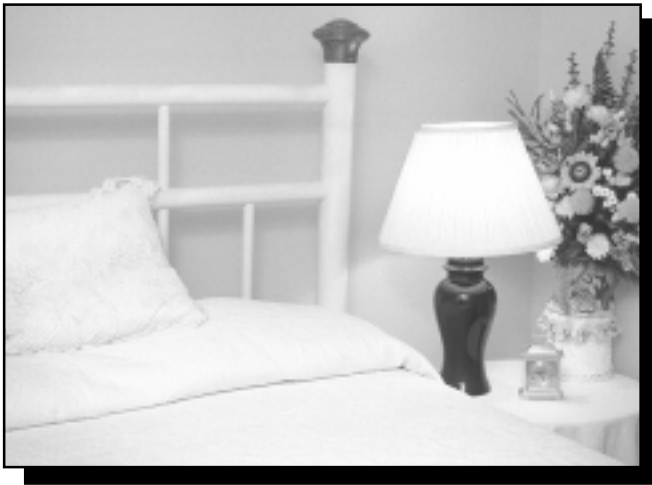


Bedrooms

Look at all your bedrooms.

Q. Is the light near the bed hard to reach?

- Place a lamp close to the bed where it is easy to reach.



Q. Is the path from your bed to the bathroom dark?

- Put in a night-light so you can see where you're walking. Some night-lights go on by themselves after dark.

Bathrooms

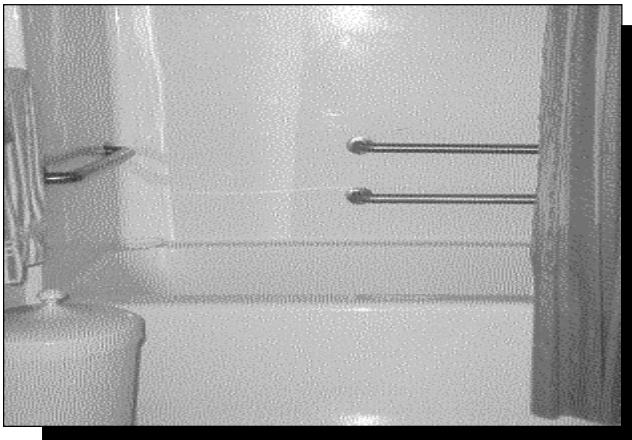
Look at all your bathrooms.

Q. Is the tub or shower floor slippery?

- Put a non-slip rubber mat or self-stick strips on the floor of the tub or shower.

Q. Do you have some support when you get in and out of the tub or up from the toilet?

- Have a handyman or a carpenter put in a grab bar inside the tub and next to the toilet.



Other Things You Can Do to Prevent Falls

- Exercise regularly. Exercise makes you stronger and improves your balance and coordination.
- Have your doctor or pharmacist look at all the medicines you take, even over-the-counter medicines. Some medicines can make you sleepy or dizzy.
- Have your vision checked at least once a year by an eye doctor. Poor vision can increase your risk of falling.
- Get up slowly after you sit or lie down.

- ❑ Wear sturdy shoes with thin, non-slip soles. Avoid slippers and running shoes with thick soles.



- ❑ Improve the lighting in your home. Use brighter light bulbs (at least 60 watts). Use lamp shades or frosted bulbs to reduce glare.
- ❑ Use reflecting tape at the top and bottom of the stairs so you can see them better.
- ❑ Paint doorsills a different color to prevent tripping.

Other Safety Tips

- Keep emergency numbers in large print near each phone.



- Put a phone near the floor in case you fall and can't get up.
- Think about wearing an alarm device that will bring help in case you fall and can't get up.

For more information contact:

The National Center for Injury Prevention and Control
Division of Unintentional Injury Prevention
4770 Buford Highway, NE, Mailstop K-63
Atlanta, GA 30341

www.cdc.gov/ncipc

www.cdc.gov/safeusa



Personal Risk Factors Fall Prevention Checklist

Yes

No

1) Have you fallen before or been injured because of a fall?

Yes

No

2) Do you feel weaker than you used to or have less strength in your arms and legs?

Yes

No

3) Have you stopped doing daily activities or avoided exercise because you're afraid of falling?

Yes

No

4) Do you experience incontinence?

Yes

No

5) Has your hand strength decreased?

Yes

No

6) Has your eyesight diminished or do you have trouble seeing depth or seeing at night?

Yes

No

7) Do you feel dizzy when you stand up?

Yes

No

8) Have you experienced hearing loss?

Yes

No

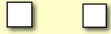
9) Do you have foot ulcers, bunions, hammertoes or callouses that hurt or cause you to adjust your steps?

Yes

No

10) Do you feel unsteady on your feet or shuffle when you walk?

Adapted from the Minnesota Safety Council Fall Prevention Checklist-Personal Risk Factors and Hennepin County Community Health Department with permission.



Recommendations for “Yes” Responses to the Assessment

- 1) People who have fallen before are more likely to fall again. Think about the factors that led you to your last fall. Take action to reduce those factors. Consider using a personal emergency response service (such as Lifeline) to help you if you fall.
- 2) Arm and leg weakness can make it harder for you to navigate your environment. You can build muscle strength by exercising regularly. Join an exercise class or learn exercises that you can do at home.
- 3) Fear of falling can be helpful if it causes you to take reasonable precautions, but it can be harmful when it causes you to avoid exercise and other daily activities that keep you active, strong and healthy. Start slowly to build your confidence in exercise and daily activities. Start with chair exercises, then move to standing and then moving exercises. If you are afraid of exercising alone, consider joining a group or class.
- 4) Incontinence can increase your chance of falling if you are anxious and rush to get to the bathroom. Check with your doctor about incontinence treatments. If nighttime incontinence is an issue, consider getting a bedside commode. Make sure the path to your bathroom is well lit and free of clutter
- 5) Decreased hand strength can put you at great risk for falling because you may have difficulty catching yourself or carrying objects safely. Avoid carrying things in your hands while walking. Put them in a pocket or purse instead. You may benefit from strength training for your hands. Talk to your health care provider about recommended exercises
- 6) Problems with eyesight can make it difficult to see things you can trip over. Get your eyes checked by an optometrist to see if you need glasses or a new prescription. Place nightlights throughout your house. For depth perception problems, place tape or paint a line at the edge of stairs so you can see the edge when walking.
- 7) Hearing is closely associated with balance. Get your hearing tested by your healthcare provider or by an audiologist. Wear a hearing aid if needed.

Adapted from the Minnesota Safety Council Fall Prevention Checklist-Personal Risk Factors and Hennepin County Community Health Department with permission.

- 8) Dizziness increases your chance of falling because it causes disorientation and even fainting. Dizziness may have many causes so you should ask your doctor to test you for postural hypotension. Take time to stabilize yourself before changing positions. Additionally, certain medication side effects can cause dizziness. Have your doctor or pharmacist review all the medications you are taking and make sure you understand how to take them correctly.

- 9) Painful foot problems can cause you to walk slowly and differently, increasing your chance of falling. If you have reduced feeling in your feet, make sure to watch your step and be aware of foot placement. Attend a foot care clinic or ask your doctor to treat your foot problems.

- 10) A strong stride and good balance are key to preventing falls. Consider using a can or other assistive device to help you feel more steady on your feet. Your doctor can help you decide which device. You can also your doctor to give you a balance assessment or recommend physical therapy. Carry a cordless or cellular phone with you so you don't have to rush to answer the phone and so you can call for help if you do fall.