

## Preventing Falls Among Seniors continued

### 3. Have your health care provider review your medicines.

Have your doctor or pharmacist look at all the medicines you take (including ones that don't need prescriptions such as cold medicines). As you get older, the way some medicines work in your body can change. Some medicines, or combinations of medicines, can make you drowsy or light-headed which can lead to a fall.

### 4. Have your vision checked.

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

## Health Tips

### Avoid excessive heat.

It can have a severe impact on the health of many elderly persons. Staying indoors in air conditioned settings, not overexerting yourself and drinking plenty of liquids, unless restricted by your doctor, is advisable.

### Tell your doctor if your hands always seem to be cold.

It might be a sign of an underactive thyroid (hypothyroidism). One function of the thyroid gland is to regulate body temperature. When it's not doing its job, the body becomes tired and less tolerant of the cold. The signs of hypothyroidism can be vague, so be sure to mention even mild changes to your doctor.

### Make your toothbrush easier to hold.

People with arthritis or other conditions that limit motion may want to attach their toothbrush handle to their hand with a wide elastic band, or enlarge it by strapping it to a sponge, Styrofoam ball or similar object. People with limited shoulder movement may find brushing easier if they lengthen the handle of the brush by attaching a long piece of wood or plastic. Electric toothbrushes are helpful to many.

### Improve the circulation of blood to the feet.

Wear comfortable shoes that fit well. Foot width may increase with age. Always have your feet measured before buying shoes. The upper part of the shoes should be made of a soft, flexible material to match the shape of your foot. Shoes made of leather can reduce the possibility of skin irritations. Soles should provide solid footing and not be slippery. Thick soles lessen pressure on hard surfaces. Low-heeled shoes are more comfortable, safer and less damaging than high-heeled shoes.

### Have a yearly fall risk assessment screening.

Through proper diagnosis and treatment many falls can be prevented. Ask your health care provider or call us today for more information on our fall prevention program. Get tested. Get treated. Get better.



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Rehabilitation,  
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# Safety Tips for

## Senior Citizens



*Preventing Falls in the Home*



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## Preventing Falls in the Home

Falls can occur at any age, but the rates of injury and death resulting from falls are greatest among seniors. This can happen because of changes in muscle and bone strength, vision, hearing, and coordination that take place with aging. Seniors are also more likely to have other health conditions and use more medications. These factors can affect balance and coordination. Falls can limit the ability to lead an active, independent life. But there are steps you can take to reduce the likelihood of falls.

*The following are guidelines you can use to make your home safer:*

### Bathroom:

- Apply non-skid appliques on tub and shower floors.
- Install grab bars in tub and around toilet. Consider a shower chair.
- Avoid throw rugs or tack rugs down securely with double sided tape.
- Keep bathroom well lighted.

### All Areas:

- Contrast in paint, furniture and carpet colors is helpful.
- Ensure that stairways have sturdy handrails.
- Keep halls, stairways, and pathways well lighted and free of clutter and obstacles. Keep walk areas clear.
- Apply slip strips on the edges of steps to reduce slick stair surfaces.
- Remove throw rugs or tack down securely with double sided adhesive tape. Tape down carpet edges.
- Place electrical cords and telephone wires away from walking paths.
- Post emergency numbers at every telephone. Carry a portable phone.

### Kitchen:

- Keep commonly used items within easy reach.
- Avoid using floor polish or wax to reduce slick surfaces on floors.

### Bedroom:

- Keep a telephone and light within easy reach of the bed.
- Rise slowly from bed to sitting position. Dangle legs for a few minutes prior to standing and walking.

### Outdoor Home Safety Measures:

- Keep walk areas clear of clutter, rocks and tools. Keep well lighted at night.
- Keep walkways clear of snow and ice.
- Make sure walkways are level, free of cracks, loose gravel, holes, and constructed with slip resistant materials.

### Other Steps You Can Take To Reduce Your Risk Of A Fall:

- Have regular vision and hearing check-ups.
- Clean eye glasses often to improve visibility.
- Wear proper fitting, supportive shoes with low heels or rubber soles.
- A proper diet and moderate exercise are essential. Females need an adequate intake of calcium.
- Use walking aids when necessary.
- See your doctor for the diagnosis, management, and treatment of underlying diseases.

## Preventing Falls Among Seniors

Falls are not just the result of getting older. Many falls can be prevented. Falls are usually caused by a number of things. By changing some of these things, you can lower your chances of falling.

*You can reduce your chances of falling by doing these things:*

### 1. Begin a regular exercise program.

Exercise is one of the most important ways to reduce 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 worker about the best type of exercise program for you.

### 2. Make your home safer.

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

- Remove things you can trip over (such as 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. Lamp shades or frosted bulbs can reduce glare.
- Have handrails and lights put in on all staircases.
- Wear shoes that give good support and have thin non-slip soles. Avoid wearing slippers and athletic shoes with deep treads.

**continued on following panel...**