

Preventing Falls

Making Your Home Safe

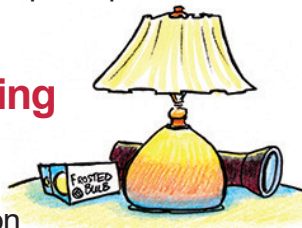
Falls are a common cause of injury in older adults. Broken hips are just one of the risks of falling. Plus, the fear of falling may cause a person to limit his or her mobility. But you can do a lot to reduce the chances that you or someone you care for will fall. Look below for tips that can help.

Most serious falls occur at home.

- ✓ Look around the house for items that may cause someone to trip and fall.
- ✓ Make sure all rugs and mats are skid proof or secured with carpet tape.
- ✓ Remove electrical cords from pathways.
- ✓ Keep floors and stairways free from clutter. Pick up papers, books, clothes and shoes.
- ✓ Roll up hoses and pick up tools in the yard.

Improve lighting in the home.

- ✓ Brighter lights can help a person see better and may prevent a fall.
- ✓ Have a lamp or night light near the bed.
- ✓ Even if the room is familiar, always turn on a light before walking into a dark area. Consider using motion-, voice- or clap-activated switches.
- ✓ Proper lighting on stairways is especially important. Step edges should be clearly visible.

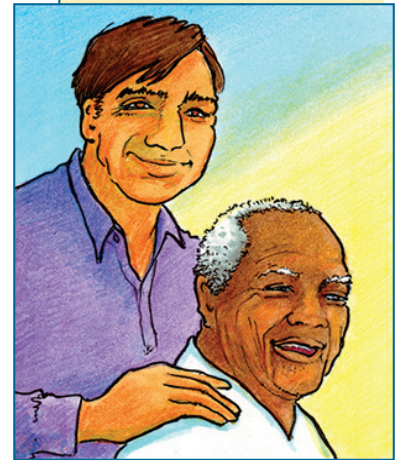


Make stairs safe!

- ✓ Be sure all handrails are firmly attached and run the entire length of the stairway.
- ✓ Replace broken handrails immediately.
- ✓ If the stairway is carpeted, be sure the carpet is firmly secured to all steps.
- ✓ Consider adding a reflective strip to the top and bottom of stairways.

Make the bathroom safer.

- ✓ Place a non-slip mat in the shower or tub.
- ✓ Install grab bars in the shower, tub and next to the toilet.
- ✓ If a person's balance isn't reliable, a shower bench with non-skid tips can be used in the shower or tub.
- ✓ A raised toilet seat is helpful for people who have trouble getting up and down from a regular toilet.



Avoid ladders and step stools.

- ✓ Keep items that are used regularly in easily reached locations.
- ✓ If you must use a step stool, use one that has a handle that can be held while on the top step.
- ✓ Only use step stools when another person is at home.



Wear safe shoes. Use a cane or walker if needed.

- ✓ Choose shoes that are easy to walk in and give good support.
- ✓ Avoid shoes with slippery soles and those with high heels.
- ✓ Using a cane or walker can help you maintain your balance.



Poor vision can lead to a fall.

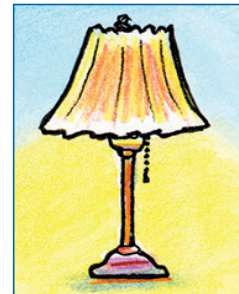
- ✓ A regular eye exam can determine if glasses are needed or if the current glasses are the right strength.
- ✓ An eye doctor can also check for cataracts or other conditions that may limit vision.

Regular exercise is important.

- ✓ Daily exercise helps maintain balance, flexibility and strength.
- ✓ Ask a health care provider about which kinds of exercise are best.

Review medications with a health care provider.

- ✓ Some medications or combination of medications can make a person drowsy or light-headed. This can increase the risk of falling.
- ✓ Ask a pharmacist or another health care provider about possible side effects from all medications, even those purchased over the counter.



Calling for help.

Keep phones in low, easy to reach locations and post emergency numbers next to the phone. Consider using a cordless or cell phone that can be carried with you or putting extra handsets in each room. If you or someone you care for has a high risk of falling, consider a personal medical alert system. These are buttons worn around the neck or wrist. In an emergency, pushing the button will send a phone call for help. Look in your phone book under “Medical Alarm.”

For more information about home safety and fall prevention for seniors visit www.eldercare.acl.gov



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