

How to Prevent Falls: Tips for Patients and Caregivers

What are the risk factors for falling?:

Anyone can fall, but some factors can make it more likely for you to fall. Some risk factors for falls are:

- If you have fallen before
- Being fearful of falling
- Feeling weak, tired, or forgetful
- Numbness or tingling in the feet or legs
- Difficulty walking or unsteady walking
- Having poor vision
- Feeling lightheaded, disoriented or dizzy
- Being dehydrated and having poor nutrition
- Using a cane or walker
- Having anxiety or depression
- Taking many medications
 - Taking certain medications such as:
 - ⇒ Medications that make you feel sleepy, such as Nyquil®, Tylenol PM®, Sudafed®, and other over-the-counter medications and herbal supplements.
 - ⇒ Sleeping pills
 - ⇒ Fluids into a vein (called IV or intravenous fluids)
 - ⇒ Laxatives
 - ⇒ Medications to prevent seizures
 - ⇒ Pain medications
 - ⇒ Some antidepressants
 - ⇒ Water pills (diuretics)
- Mixing alcohol and certain medications.



How to Prevent Falls While You Are Receiving Treatment:

- Bring someone with you who can help you get around.
- Ask for a wheelchair to use while you are receiving treatment.
- Have someone help you while you're in the dressing room or bathroom.
- When getting up from a lying position, always sit at the side of the bed or exam table for a few minutes before you stand up.
- If you use a cane or walker, bring it with you and use it when you come for treatment.



If you feel dizzy or weak, let someone know you need help!

How to Prevent Falls While You Are at Home:

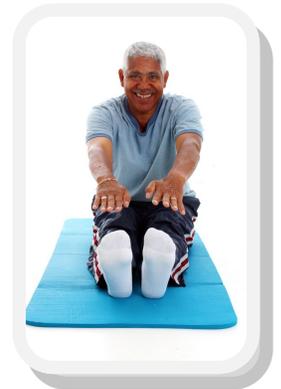
- Set up your furniture so that you can walk around without anything blocking your way.
- If your lighting is dim, use brighter light bulbs. Use a nightlight or keep a flashlight close to you at night.
- Secure electrical cords.
- Remove throw rugs or other loose items from your floor. If you have an area rug covering a slippery floor, make sure the rug does not have any loose or fringed edges.
- Add handrails to stairways.
- Install raised toilet seats.
- If your bathroom is not close to your bedroom (or where you spend most of your time during the day), get a commode. Place it near you so you do not have to walk to the bathroom.
- Install grab bars and handrails next to your toilet and inside your shower. Never use towel racks to pull yourself up because they are not strong enough to hold your weight.
- Apply anti-slip stickers to the floor of your tub or shower.
- Buy a shower chair and a hand-held shower head so you can sit while taking a shower.
- When getting up from a lying position, always sit at the side of the bed or couch for a few minutes before you stand.

Preventing Falls at Home—Continued

- Arrange items in your kitchen and bathroom cabinets at shoulder height so that you don't have to bend too low or reach too high.
- Wear shoes with low heels and slip resistant soles inside and outside the house; avoid going barefoot or wearing slippers.
- Be careful of pets. Have them wear metal tags or bells so that you can hear them.

Other Things You Can Do to Prevent Falls:

- Exercise regularly. Exercise makes you stronger and improves your balance and coordination. Eat nutritious foods and stay well-hydrated.
- Avoid alcohol.
- Have your doctor or pharmacist look at all the medicines you take, including over-the-counter medicines, herbs and supplements. 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.



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.

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