

## Preventing Falls Among Individuals with Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias

As we age, our risk of falling increases. Alzheimer's disease and other dementias increase a person's falls risk even more. Memory loss has been linked to physical deterioration and decreased strength, increased balance issues, frequent shuffling gait and visual changes such as decreased visual acuity and impaired depth perception and peripheral vision. Impaired memory and poor judgment that come with dementia are additional risk factors because a person with dementia may not think or remember to take safety precautions. As a result, caregivers play a critical role in helping loved ones with dementia recognize and address falls risks.

While it may not be possible to prevent all falls, most falls can be prevented through some advanced planning and increased attention to risks. Ways to protect your loved one with dementia from a fall include:

- Keep your loved one moving through a regular exercise program, a simplified program of chair exercises or even walking around the block.
- Be a good observer, attempting to be proactive and prevent the falls. For example, if your loved one is shuffling and catching their feet on throw rugs, take up the rugs.
- If your loved one is hesitating to move forward when there is a change in flooring color, be aware that they may be "seeing" a dark endless hole; add a light rug to cross this area.
- If your loved one is unsteady on the stairs, add a second railing and increase the lighting.
- If unnecessary trips to the basement are taking place, secure the door.
- If falls are occurring when getting out of deep chairs, raise the level of the chair by adding lifts to the legs or obtain a higher chair with sturdy arms.
- Adaptations in the bathroom can help with unsteadiness. Consider adding a vertical bar at the head of the tub, adding toilet bars to provide stability when getting up from the commode, and removing slippery rugs.

When explaining the reason for changes to home, health and habits, avoid language that implies blame ("because of your memory loss") and instead focus on the benefits ("it will make it easier for me").

For additional help or information regarding falls and the memory-impaired, call the Alzheimer's Association at 1-800-272-3900. The Alzheimer's Association is the world's leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer's care, support and research. Their mission is to eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health. Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's®. Visit [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org).

STEADY U Ohio is a comprehensive falls prevention initiative led by Governor John Kasich and the Ohio Department of Aging, and supported by Ohio government and state business partners to strengthen existing falls prevention activities, identify opportunities for new initiatives and coordinate a statewide educational campaign to bring falls prevention to the forefront of planning for individuals, families, health care providers, business and community leaders and all Ohioans. Visit [www.steadyu.ohio.gov](http://www.steadyu.ohio.gov).