



**Preventing Falls...
One Step at a Time**

Falling is not a natural side-effect of aging, and most falls can be prevented. By knowing and managing your risk factors, you can live a full and active life free of the fear of falling.

Involve your family in your quest to be falls-free. Taking action to prevent falls and maintain your independence is something to be proud of. By asking your family's help, you'll also be teaching them prevention techniques they'll use throughout their lives.

Stay Active and Healthy to Prevent Falls

- Simple exercise, like walking or swimming at least 15 minutes a day can help build muscle strength and improve balance, which can prevent falls.*
- Find a good balance and exercise program, like tai chi, to build balance, strength, and flexibility. Select a program you like and take a friend.*
- Talk to your health care provider and ask for an assessment of your risk of falling. Share your history of recent falls.
- Regularly review your medications with your doctor or pharmacist for side effects that may increase your risk of falling.
- Get your vision and hearing checked annually and update your eyeglasses.
- Slow down and think through the task you are performing. Be mindful of possible falls risks and act accordingly.
- Drink 6-8 glasses of non-alcoholic liquids each day to prevent low blood pressure, fatigue and confusion.
- Eat a well-balanced diet with a variety of vegetables and calcium-rich foods like yogurt, cheese, milk, orange juice, tofu and calcium-fortified cereals to promote your health.

** Consult with your doctor before beginning any new exercise routine or program.*

Around the House

Falls prevention begins at home. As we age, our bodies change and things that were once appropriate for us may no longer be. Look around your home, or the home of a loved one, for some of these common items or habits that could actually cause a fall:

- Throw rugs beautify our living space, but they can also cause slips, trips and falls. Some people use rugs to cover cords, which is not only a falls risk, but also a fire hazard.
- Lighting is another way to make our homes look good, but lighting that is too dim can make it hard to see falls hazards. Likewise, lighting that is too bright can cause glare on walking surfaces or cast shadows that can hide hazards.
- Your home most likely has stairs - from a few steps at the entrances to a staircase to the basement or other floors. Storing items in stairwells, as well as hanging items on hand rails, can lead to falls.

Around the House (Continued)

If you are a Medicaid or Medicare recipient, talk with your doctor about the potential benefits of an environmental falls assessment and if you may qualify for one to be conducted by a physical or occupational therapist.

By taking a few simple, inexpensive precautions, you can make your home immediately more fall-proof:

- Arrange furniture so you have a clear pathway between rooms.
- Place a lamp, telephone, or flashlight near your bed.
- Install a night light along the route between your bedroom and the bathroom.
- Keep electric, appliance and telephone cords out of walkways, but do not put cords under a rug.
- Secure loose area rugs with double-faced tape, tacks, or slip-resistant backing.
- Store food, dishes, and cooking equipment within easy reach.
- Repair loose stairway carpeting or wooden boards immediately.
- Put a bright-colored stripe of durable tape on the front edge of each stair so that you can see them better.
- Place a slip-resistant rug adjacent to the bathtub for safe exit and entry.
- Use a rubber mat or place nonskid adhesive textured strips inside the tub.

These home modifications and assistive devices may cost a little more than the steps above, but could be good investments in keeping your home safe now and in the future:

- Invest in a folding step-stool with a hand rail for access to out-of-reach places.
- Buy a cordless or cellular phone so that you don't have to rush to answer it and so that you'll have it handy to call for help should you fall.
- Add ceiling light fixtures with easy-to-reach switches to rooms that currently are only lit by lamps.
- If you use furniture, like chairs, tables and dressers, to steady yourself as you walk around, invest in a cane or walker instead.
- Install grab bars on bathroom walls near the bathtub, shower and toilet.
- Stabilize yourself on the toilet by using either raised seat or a special toilet seat with armrests.
- Use a sturdy, plastic seat in the bathtub if you cannot lower yourself to the floor of the tub or if you are unsteady.
- Install handrails on *both* sides of the stairway. Each should be 30 inches above the stairs and extend the full length of the stairs.
- Remove door sills higher than a half inch.

For more tips and resources to prevent falls, visit:

www.steadyu.ohio.gov