

## Are You at Risk for a Fall?

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**Check the boxes for any statement that is True for You:**

- I have been told by my doctor, nurse or therapist to ask for help before doing things such as getting out of bed, getting off the toilet or standing from a chair.**

**When you need help before getting up or standing up you are at a greater risk of falling:**

- You may have a loss of strength or balance from an illness, certain medications or treatments. An injury can also increase your chance of falling.
- Falls most often occur when you move from one position to another, such as getting out of bed or standing up after sitting in a chair.
- Ask for help before you try to get up on your own.
- Be sure you are safe to get up on your own. If you feel lightheaded or dizzy, sit down right away and wait for help.

- I have fallen or nearly fallen in the past.**

**When you have fallen or nearly fallen before you are at a greater risk of falling.**

- I am 65 or older.**

**When you are 65 or older you are at a greater risk of falling:**

- You should exercise daily to improve your strength and balance.

- I take more than 2 medications that are prescription and/or over the counter.**

**When you take more than 2 medications you are at a greater risk of falling:**

- Some medications that can lead to a fall include sleeping pills, pain relieving medications and blood pressure medications (some are called water pills).
- Ask your doctor, pharmacist or health care provider about your medications and whether any side effects of the medications taken alone or together could put you at risk for a fall.

**☐ I have weakness in my legs, brittle bones and/or bone disease.**

**When you have weakness, brittle bones and/or bone disease such as osteoporosis you are at greater risk of falling:**

- Talk to your doctor or a dietitian to check that you are getting enough vitamins and minerals in your diet. You may need to take a multivitamin each day or other supplements to keep your bones strong.
- Make sure you follow a healthy diet and lifestyle to reduce your risk of brittle bones, bone disease and falls.

**☐ I have other health problems such as diabetes, a history of seizures, or a problem with my blood pressure.**

**When you have other health problems you are at a greater risk of falling:**

- Diabetes can cause loss of feeling in your feet or problems with your vision that can increase your risk of falling.
- Low blood pressure or decreased fluid intake due to nausea, vomiting or diarrhea can make you dizzy and increase your risk of falling.
- Heart and/or blood pressure problems can cause you to feel weak, dizzy or lightheaded and increase your risk of falling.

**☐ I have furniture, rugs or other items on the floor at home where I need to walk and move around.**

**When you have too much furniture, clutter and/or loose rugs or carpets you are at a greater risk of falling:**

- Remove all throw rugs and secure down area rugs.
- Remove some furniture to decrease clutter and clear walkways.
- Have cords and wires secured against the wall.
- Always use your walker or cane when moving around.
- Avoid holding onto or pulling on furniture to support yourself while moving around.

- I do not eat at least 3 healthy meals a day that include a variety of foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, meat and other proteins.**

**When you have an unhealthy diet you are at a greater risk of falling:**

- Speak with your doctor, dietitian or health care provider to make sure you are getting enough vitamins and minerals each day.
- Limit alcohol intake.
- Be sure to maintain a healthy, balanced diet.

- I do not wear supportive footwear or non-skid socks at home.**

- I walk barefoot.**

**When you do not wear shoes or walk around barefoot you are at a greater risk of falling:**

- Wear supportive and comfortable low heels or flat shoes with treads on the bottom.
- Wear slippers with non-skid soles.
- Wear non-skid socks.
- Never walk around in bare feet or regular socks.

- I do not have any equipment to help me get around in my bathroom safely.**

- I may only have some equipment to help me get around in my bathroom safely.**

- I do not know if I have the right equipment to help me get around in my bathroom safely.**

**When you do not have equipment to help you get around in your bathroom, you are at a greater risk of falling:**

- Use equipment as recommended by your occupational therapist to make your home more accessible. Some examples include a raised toilet seat, grab bars, and a bath bench.
- Do not use towel bars to help you stand up because they will not support your weight.

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# How Can I Prevent a Fall?

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## Vision and Eye Check:

- Have your vision tested every 1 or 2 years.
- Wear glasses if you need to and take time to adjust to new glasses.



## Hearing and Ear Check:

- Have your hearing tested every 1 or 2 years. Be sure to wear a properly fitted hearing aid and change the battery regularly.

## Medication Check:

- Talk to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse about medications you are taking and the side effects.
- You can also ask for a MedsCheck at your pharmacy.



This is a free appointment where you meet with a pharmacist and go over all of the medications, vitamins and herbal products you may take to make sure they are safe for you. It is a good time to learn about your medications, when to take them and how to take them safely.

## Nutrition and Diet:

- Be aware of what you are eating and drinking. It is important to have healthy food balanced meals and snacks throughout the day.
- Some medications can cause problems when mixed with alcohol. Talk to your doctor, dietitian or health care provider to make sure you can find ways to have a healthy, balanced diet.

## Be Aware and Careful:

- Do not get up too quickly after sitting or lying down. To avoid getting dizzy, take your time and stand in one place until your body adjusts. If you feel dizzy, sit right back down so you do not lose your balance.
- Use your walking aid the way your Physiotherapist or Rehab Assistant taught you.
- Wear supportive and comfortable, low-heeled, rubber-soled shoes with good support. Wear non-skid socks and non-skid slippers.
- Never wear plain socks and smooth-soled slippers or go barefoot.



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# Home Safety Checklist

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**Falls are often due to things that are often overlooked but easy to fix. Most falls can be avoided.**

## Helpful Hints

- It is a good idea to carry a cell phone or portable phone with you at all times. You can put it into a small bag around your waist or on your walker as you move around.
- Take your time and get into the habit of moving at speeds that are safe for your energy level and ability. For example, do not rush to answer the door.
- Be aware of where your pet is when you are moving around. You need to be very careful at all times to avoid tripping over a pet.



## Stairways and Halls

- These should have good lighting and be clutter-free.
- Light switches should be at the top and bottom of the stairs.
- Try putting reflective tape or painting a contrasting colour on the top edge or steps to increase visibility.
- Mount sturdy handrails.
- Carpets should be firmly attached.
- Avoid using runners or loose throw rugs unless they have a slip-resistant backing.



## Kitchen

- Clean spills up right away.
- Put items you use most often on the counter or lower shelves for easy access.
- Avoid using step stools, as well as climbing and reaching.

## Living Areas

- Arrange furniture so you can move around with ease.
- Couches, sofas and chairs should be easy to get out of. Choose chairs with armrests when you can.
- You can use furniture risers to increase the height of a chair, couch or sofa to get up easier.
- Area rugs should be removed or must be well-secured to the floor.
- Electrical cords should not be in areas where you walk.
- Use your cane or walker rather than holding onto furniture for support when walking.
- Use caution when sitting down. Before sitting make sure the back of your legs are touching the seat behind you and the seat is against a secure surface. If the seat has arm supports, reach back to hold onto them before you sit.

## Bedrooms

- Should be well lit.
- Use a night light or light switch within reach from the bed.
- Place a telephone near the bed within reach.
- Make sure the floor is clear of clutter.
- Floor coverings need to be firmly attached to the floor.



## Bathrooms

- Should be fitted with equipment as recommended by your Occupational Therapist.
- Equipment may include grab bars in the shower, tub and beside the toilet, a raised toilet seat and bath stool or bench.
- Soap build-up should be removed to prevent slipping.
- Use nonskid shower and tub mats or abrasive strips inside the shower and tub.
- Be aware that surfaces may be slippery after a hot bath or shower due to condensation.
- Use a nightlight in the bathroom to make trips to the bathroom at night safer.
- Do not lock the bathroom door so it can be opened if you need help.

## Outside Your Home

- You may need to ask for help to maintain your home through the seasons to stay safe.
- Grass, leaves, snow and ice need to be removed from stairs, porches, decks and places you walk.
- Make sure outdoor stairs, pathways or decks have railings and provide good traction with textured surfaces.
- An outdoor mailbox should be safe and easy to reach.
- Leave your porch light on if you go out at night so you can see well when you arrive home. Think about putting a motion detector light in to increase visibility when needed.
- Make sure your house number can be seen clearly, so emergency help can find your home quickly.



## Preventing a fall in the hospital

- Make sure you can reach your call bell, telephone, any assistive devices and bedside table.
- Call before you get out of bed.
- Get up slowly before you stand.
- Follow the instructions given to you by your Occupational Therapist, Physiotherapist and/or Rehab Assistant when moving around or transferring.
- Never lean on bedside tables, tray or IV pole to help you walk or stand.
- Avoid wearing long nightgowns or robes as you can trip on them.
- Wear non-skid slippers, socks or shoes.



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## What do I do if I fall?

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1. If you fall, try to remain calm. Do not panic.
2. Call for help if someone is in the house or with you.
3. Try to determine if you are hurt.
4. If you are not hurt, try to get up off of the floor to a chair, sofa or couch.
5. If you cannot get up, call for help:
  - If you have lifeline, press for help on your lifeline button.
  - If you are alone, crawl slowly to the telephone and call 911, a friend, family member or neighbour.
  - If your door is locked, you need to call someone who has a key.

