

Fall Prevention

Hints to Keep Your Feet Beneath You

How Serious is the Problem?

- **More than one-third of adults ages 65 and older fall each year.**
- **Falls are the leading cause of injury among older adults, and the most common cause of nonfatal injuries and hospital admissions for trauma.**
- **In 2003 more than 1.8 million seniors age 65 and older were treated in emergency departments for fall related injuries.**
- **Of those who fall, 20% to 30% suffer moderate to severe injuries such as hip fractures or head trauma.**
- **Among older adults, the majority of fractures are caused by falls.**
- **The most common fractures are of the vertebrae, hip, forearm, leg, ankle, upper arm, and hands.**

Risk Factors for Falling

- **Having had a previous fall.**
- **Having lower body weakness, gait, or balance problems.**
- **Wearing glasses, or having other visual problems.**
- **Having more than one chronic disease, such as history of stroke, Parkinson's Disease, or postural hypotension.**
- **Taking more than four medications or using psychoactive medications.**
- **Wearing shoes with thick, soft soles.**
- **Being cognitively impaired.**

What can you do to reduce the risk for falls?

- **Use proper lighting:**
 - **Turn on lights prior to entering a room.**
 - **Use night-lights or indoor/outdoor lights with sensors.**

- **Make sure surfaces you walk on are safe and secure:**
 - **Avoid slippery surfaces, highly polished floors.**
 - **Clear pathways of debris, electrical cords, leaves, snow, and ice.**
 - **Avoid scatter rugs; use only rubber-backed, non-skid rugs in good repair in the bathroom.**
 - **If using area rugs, secure edges with double faced tape or tack down.**

- **Use appropriate walking aides such as a walker or cane if prescribed by your doctor or physical therapist.**

- **Use proper footwear.**
 - **Use rubber soled sneakers or shoes.**
 - **Avoid shoes without a backing and any worn out shoes without traction.**

- **Check with your doctor or pharmacist to see if your medications can cause dizziness or increase your risk of falls.**

- **Use handrails on stairs and grab bars in the shower or tub.**

- **Have your vision and hearing checked regularly.**
 - **Make sure glasses are clean and hearing aids are checked on a regular basis.**

- **Change your position slowly when getting up from lying down, resting, or after eating. If you feel dizzy stay in one position until the dizziness clears.**

Finally, one of the most important ways to reduce the risk for falls!!!

EXERCISE, EXERCISE, EXERCISE!

- **Maintaining a regular exercise program helps to improve strength, balance, and coordination.**
- **The following pages include exercises to help strengthen the arms and legs as well as improve balance.**
- **Talk with your physician before beginning any exercise program to make sure certain exercises are best for you.**

Falls are one of the leading causes of injury, hospitalizations, and in some cases death, among elderly. Some say that falling is a part of growing old. That does not have to be the case. Many falls can be prevented by taking the necessary precautions to assure your own safety as well as those around you.