

Fall Facts

- 1 in 4 older adults (65+) fall each year.
- Sixty percent of falls occur in the home.
- Falls are the number one cause of nursing home admissions.

Risk factors for falls include:

- Age: 85+
- Living alone
- Vision impairment
- Poor nutrition and lack of activity
- History of falls

What Can Be Done?

The good news is that many falls are preventable! Here are some ways to reduce your risk:

- *Be physically active.*
- *Review your medications.*
- *Manage your chronic conditions.*
- *Have your vision checked annually.*
- *Make needed home modifications.*
- *Talk to your healthcare provider about falls and if you have a fear of falling.*

Exercise

Regularly doing strength, balance, and flexibility exercises can reduce your risk of falling.

Sit-to-Stand Chair Exercise*

1. Sit in the middle of the chair.
2. Place your hands on the opposite shoulder, and crossed at the wrists.
3. Keep your feet flat on the floor.
4. Keep your back straight and keep your arms against your chest.
5. Stand up straight for one second, then return to a seated position.
6. Repeat this several times. Increase the repetitions over time.

**Please check with your healthcare provider as this exercise may not be suitable for everyone.*



How to Get Up From a Fall

1. Relax and take a moment to assess how you feel. If you are in severe pain, stay where you are and call for help.



2. Roll over onto the side of your body that hurts the least.



3. Pull your knees toward your body, place your hand on the ground in front of your chest, and push yourself into a 'table' position.



4. If you can, crawl to a couch or chair, put both hands on the seat, and slowly push yourself up. If one knee feels stronger, bend it, and put your weight on it, as you push yourself up with both arms on the chair. Keep your hands on the chair for support as you slowly turn around and sit on the couch or chair.



Questions to Ask Your Healthcare Provider

1. Can my medication contribute to a fall? Have your healthcare provider review all current medications and supplements. Ask about possible side effects or interactions from the combination of drugs.

2. How can my current health affect my risk of falling? Your healthcare provider can conduct a physical examination to evaluate your functional, neurological, visual, cardiac, and mental health status to determine if you are at an increased risk of falling. Ask for referrals if needed. You may benefit from seeing a healthcare provider who specializes in vision, physical therapy, or occupational therapy.

3. Should I be taking nutritional supplements? Talk to your healthcare provider before starting any medications, including supplements. You may benefit from increasing the amount of vitamins and minerals in your diet. Having too little may cause muscle weakness, decreased bone mass, and reduced neurological functioning which can increase your risk of falling. Keep a medication list and update it regularly. It should include all prescriptions, over-the-counter medications, and supplements.

4. Can physical activity reduce my risk of falling? Being physically active is one of the most important ways to reduce your risk of falling. It can help improve strength, balance, flexibility, and bone mass. Tai Chi and Matter of Balance are two programs that have been shown to reduce falls and increase activity levels in older adults.

Home Safety Checklist

Floors

- Clear pathways of furniture.
- Remove clutter from floors and hallways.
- Remove low chairs that are difficult to sit in and get out of easily.
- Remove throw rugs or secure them with double-sided floor tape.
- Coil or tape cords and wires to the wall.
- Do not use floor wax.

Stairs and Steps

- Remove all objects from the stairs.
- Fix broken or uneven steps, and secure loose carpet.
- Install handrails on both sides of stairs. Fix any loose handrails.
- Apply reflective tape to the top and bottom of stairs.
- Have an electrician install an overhead light at the top and bottom of the stairs.

Clothing/Accessories

- Wear sturdy shoes with thin, non-slip soles.
- Hem pants so they don't touch the floor when walking bare foot.
- Wear non-slip socks with grips
- Consider wearing a medical alert device.

Outdoors

- Repair cracks and gaps in sidewalks and driveways.
- Trim shrubbery along the path to the door.

Kitchen

- Keep frequently used items within reach on lower shelves (about waist level).
- Keep a current list of healthcare information on your refrigerator in case of an emergency.

Bathrooms

- Use a non-slip rubber mat on the shower or tub floor.
- Install grab bars next to the tub and toilet.
- Install a raised toilet seat.
- Use a padded tub or shower seat.
- Use a handheld shower head.

Telephones

- Make sure the phone can be reached from the bed and the floor.
- Consider keeping a cordless or cellular phone in your pocket.
- Keep a list of emergency numbers next to each phone.

Lighting

- Install lights by doors, walkways, and at the top and bottom of stairs.
- Replace burnt out light bulbs.
- Install night lights or motion sensor lights in all rooms.

Bedrooms

- Adjust bed to a comfortable height.

Protect and Maintain Your Independence



A Guide to Preventing Falls

County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency,
Aging & Independence Services

For more information, call (858) 495-5500 or visit:

www.SanDiegoFallPrevention.org

