

Avoiding Falls – 20 to be Safe!

Every year millions of adults fall, leading to injuries and emergency room visits. Many of these falls and injuries can be prevented. Most of all falls happen at home so taking certain safety precautions can prevent many of these falls.

Did you know that according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- Each year, one in every three adults age 65 and older falls.
- Every 35 minutes a senior dies from a fall related injury.
- Twenty to thirty percent of people who fall suffer moderate to severe injuries such as wounds, fractures, or head injuries. These injuries can make it hard to get around or live independently, and increase the risk of early death.
- Falls are the most common cause of traumatic brain injuries (TBI).
- Most fractures among adults are caused by falls. The most common are fractures of the spine, hip, forearm, leg, ankle, pelvis, upper arm, and hand.
- Many people who fall, even if they are not injured, develop a fear of falling and then they limit their activities.
- Falls are the leading cause of injury-related deaths in people older than 65.

Falls occur unexpectedly and often with devastating consequences. Taking control of your environment at home is a first, very crucial step in preventing future falls. Take this simple 20 question test to determine if your home is as safe as it can be to help you avoid a possibly disastrous fall.

Any “Yes” answers put you at greater risk for falling. Look at the “Solution” beneath each question for a suggestion on how to make your home safer.

Outside:

1. Are there items on the ground leading up to your house (leaves, dirt, toys, gravel, flower pots, etc)?

Solution-Have someone remove any items that are potential trip hazards.

2. Do you have a big step leading up to your door way?

Solution-Consider installing grab bars to be helpful when entering the doorway.

3. Is there insufficient lighting in the walkway leading up to your house?

Solution-Have additional and/or brighter lighting installed.

4. Do you have to walk on grass in order to get to your house?

Solution-Consider walking on the cemented walkways. Have walkways installed.

5. Are there tools and yard equipment (hoses, rakes etc.) lying around the yard?
Solution-Have yard equipment removed and stored in a safe, secure area.

Inside:

6. Do you have a lounge chair or couch that is too hard to get out of?
Solution-Consider replacing with one that's easier to get in and out of.
7. Do you have a coffee table, or other tables that are easy to trip over?
Solution-Place furniture against a wall where it can be easily seen.
8. Is it difficult to get in and out of your bathtub?
Solution-Consider installing grab bars near the bathtub.
9. Is surface in tub/shower slippery?
Solution-Consider installing a non-slip surface.
10. Is it difficult to get on and off the toilet?
Solution-Consider installing handles, or grab bars near the toilet.
11. Do you get dizzy while in shower?
Solution-Place a shower chair in the shower.
12. Look at ALL your walkways. Are there cords or other clutter?
Solution-Remove all clutter and/or electric cords out of walkways.
13. Is there clutter on your staircase?
Solution-Remove items from staircase to avoid potential trip hazards
14. Do you have holes or tears in the carpet or rugs?
Solution-Have repaired right away
15. Do you have rugs in your house?
Solutions-Consider using nonskid padding under rugs or try taping the corners down using double sided tape. If unable to secure, remove the rugs completely.
16. Are you missing a handrail on your staircase?
Solution-Have one installed right away.

17. Do you have a lighting switch at the top and bottom of your staircase?

Solution-Ensure light switches are installed at the top & bottom of your staircases

18. Are hallways dimly lit?

Solution-Install a plug-in light.

19. Are there items on a shelf that are TOO high or TOO low for you to reach?

Solution-Store frequently used items in easy to reach places.

20. Do you use a step stool to get difficult to reach items?

Solution-Store items at a height level you're able to reach without a step stool.

More Safety Recommendations:

- Have your vision checked routinely.
- Know the side effects of your medicines because some may lead to the loss of balance and coordination.
- Limit the amount of alcohol you drink.
- Exercise regularly to stay flexible and keep your bones strong.
- Keep emergency numbers in large print near each phone.
- If you are at a higher risk for falling, consider wearing an alarm device to notify help in the event you fall and can't get up.
- Get up slowly after you sit or lie down.
- Wear rubber soled and low heeled shoes that fit properly and support your feet when you're both inside and outside the house.
- Be aware of pets at all times when they are in the area.
- Place pet's food and water bowls out of the way so as not to be a tripping hazard.

So, If you have experienced a recent fall, feel that you are unsteady on your feet, the room is spinning around you, you feel you're moving when standing still or you lose your balance easily, discuss your symptoms with your Primary Doctor at your next visit. Or better yet, schedule a visit now to discuss this issue and get on the road to treatment so that you can live a healthier, happier life style beginning now!