

How Can Older Adults Prevent Falls?

Every 18 seconds an older adult is in the emergency room because of a fall

Each year, one in every three adults ages 65 or older falls and 2 million are treated in emergency departments for fall-related injuries. And the risk of falling increases with each decade of life. The long-term consequences of fall injuries, such as hip fractures and traumatic brain injuries (TBI), can impact the health and independence of older adults.

Thankfully, falls are not an inevitable part of aging. In fact, many falls can be prevented. Here are some prevention tips to help protect you against the dangers of falling:

Get some exercise. Lack of exercise can lead to weak legs and this increases the chances of falling. Exercise programs like Tai Chi can increase strength and improve balance, making falls much less likely.

Be mindful of medications. Some medicines, or combinations of medicines, can have side effects like dizziness or drowsiness. This can make falling more likely. Having a doctor or pharmacist review all medications can help reduce the chance of risky side effects and drug interactions.

Keep your vision sharp. Poor vision can make it harder to get around safely. You should have your eyes checked every year and wear glasses or contact lenses with the right prescription strength.

Eliminate hazards at home. About half of all falls happen at home. A home safety check can help identify potential fall hazards that need to be removed or changed.

- Remove things you can trip over (like papers, books, clothes, and shoes) from stairs and places where you walk
- Install handrails and lights on all staircases
- Remove small throw rugs or use double-sided tape to keep the rugs from slipping
- Keep items you use often in cabinets you can reach easily without using a step stool
- Put grab bars inside and next to the tub or shower and next to your toilet
- Use non-slip mats in the bathtub and on shower floors
- Improve the lighting in your home. As you get older, you need brighter lights to see well. Hang light-weight curtains or shades to reduce glare
- Wear shoes both inside and outside the house
- Avoid going barefoot or wearing slippers

