

Don't let a **FALL** trip you up...

As we age, the risk of falling becomes more serious. Broken bones often result from falls, and these can lead to lifelong disability. Even if someone is not hurt by a fall, the fear of falling again can limit a person's activities.

Most falls happen at home. Nearly half are caused by hazards that could have been prevented!

By making a few changes in your home and in your habits, you can greatly reduce your risk of falling.

Listed below you will find a check list to help you identify places and situations that put you at risk for a fall. Start today and make changes where you can to help yourself prevent a fall from tripping you up!

Use this checklist to find and correct habits and hazards that could trip you up. Each "no" answer indicates a need for a change in your health and safety habits or your home.

HEALTH AND SAFETY HABITS

Exercise

- Y N Do you bend and stretch every day? (This helps keep your joints, tendons and ligaments flexible.)
- Y N Are you physically active? (This is important to promote good muscle tone and balance.)
- Y N Do you walk briskly or perform another type of weight-bearing exercise at least three times a week, for 30 minutes or more each time? (This helps your bones stay strong.)

Sight and sound

- Y N Do you have your hearing tested regularly?
- Y N If hearing aids have been recommended for you, do you use them appropriately?
- Y N Do you have earwax build-up removed regularly?

- Y N Do you have your vision checked regularly?
- Y N If you wear prescription glasses, is your prescription up to date?
- Y N If you wear bifocals, are you comfortable when you look down while standing and walking?

Nutrition and health

- Y N Do you get enough rest to keep your body and mind alert?
- Y N Do you have regular health screenings?
- Y N Have you asked your doctor whether you have any medical condition that might make you more likely to fall and what you can do about it?
- Y N If you are often dizzy or lightheaded, have you asked your doctor if it could be a side effect of any medications you take?

- Y N Are any medications you take weakening your bones? (Ask your doctor.)
- Y N Are you getting enough calcium and weight-bearing exercise to help prevent osteoporosis, a condition in which the bones become brittle and break easily?
- Y N To avoid unsafe interactions between the medications you use, do you talk with your pharmacist before you buy an over-the-counter medicine?
- Y N If you drink alcohol, do you drink only a small or moderate amount? (Alcohol disturbs normal balance and reflexes.)
- Y N If you drink even a little alcohol, do you know whether it is creating any unsafe interactions with your medications?

Getting around

- Y N Do you take time to regain your balance when you sit up after lying down or when you stand up after sitting?
- Y N Do you wear supportive, rubber-soled, low-heeled shoes?
- Y N Do you avoid wearing slippers or smooth-soled shoes on stairs and waxed floors? Do your slippers fit well, and do they have soles that provide traction? (It is unsafe to walk in stocking feet.)
- Y N If you occasionally feel dizzy, do you use a cane, walking stick or walker to help keep your balance?
- Y N Do you watch for slippery pavement when walking outdoors? Do you watch for slippery pavement when you get into or out of cars or buses?

- Y N Are you alert to unexpected hazards in your path, such as out-of-place furniture, toys and pets?
- Y N Do you avoid walking on stairs or uneven surfaces in poorly lit public places, such as theaters?
- Y N When you carry bulky packages, do you make sure that you can see clearly around them?
- Y N When you must carry a large load up or down stairs, do you divide it into smaller loads, leaving one hand free to grasp the railing?
- Y N Do you avoid rushing to answer the phone or doorbell?
- Y N Do you avoid rushing to cross streets, especially in wet or icy weather?
- Y N Do you always use a step stool (never a chair) when you have to reach high places?
- Y N If you start to fall, do you know how to reduce your risk of injury?
- Y N If you live alone, do you carry a phone in your pocket or are you in contact with a friend, neighbor or relative every day? (If you were injured in a fall and couldn't make contact, would someone check up on you?)

HOME HAZARDS

Entrances

- Y N Are your stairs and walkways well lit? Are the edges of each step clearly seen?
- Y N Do your stairs have sturdy, easy-to-grip railings?
- Y N Are your outdoor stairs and walkways free of cracks, dips and holes?

Living areas

- Y N Can you turn on a light without having to walk into a dark room?
- Y N Does your favorite chair have armrests that are long enough to help you get up and sit down?
- Y N Are chairs and tables stable enough to support your weight if you lean on them?
- Y N Are small rugs and floor runners secured with carpet tape or nonskid backing? (Rugs and runners are a major cause of falls. They should be fastened down with perfectly flat edges, or removed.)
- Y N Are walkways kept clear of things that could trip you, such as cords, low furniture and toys?

Kitchen

- Y N Do you use nonskid wax, no wax or well-secured carpeting on the floors?
- Y N If you insist on using floor mats, do they have backing that grips?
- Y N Can you reach the things you use most often without using a step stool?
- Y N Is the lighting bright enough for you to see well, but not bright enough to cause a glare?

Halls and stairs

- Y N Can you clearly see the outline of each step as you go up and down? (Each step can be marked with brightly colored adhesive tape strips. Don't use shag carpets, deep-pile carpets, or carpets with busy patterns on stairs.)
- Y N Are there lights and light switches at both the top and bottom of the stairs?

- Y N Do all stairways have securely fastened handrails on both sides of the stairwell? (Rails should extend beyond the top and bottom steps, and the ends should turn in.)
- Y N Does your hand wrap easily and completely around the rail? (Rails should be round and be anchored one to two inches away from the walls.)
- Y N Do stairs have even surfaces with no metal strips or rubber mats to trip you?
- Y N Are stairs kept free of clutter?

Bathroom

- Y N Do the tub and shower have rubber mats, nonskid strips or nonskid surfaces?
- Y N Do you have a grab bar on the wall or side of the tub or shower? (If you have balance problems or weakness, you should use a bath seat or bench.)
- Y N Is the floor safe? (If it's slippery or has loose tiles or loose rugs, it's risky.)
- Y N Can you get on and off the toilet easily? (If not, you should have someone install a raised toilet, a grab bar on the wall, or a toilet safety frame attached to the toilet.)
- Y N Do you hold onto grab bars when you get into or out of the tub or shower?

Bedroom

- Y N Do you keep a light or flashlight within easy reach of your bed?
- Y N Does your bedspread clear the floor?
- Y N Does a night-light brighten your path to the bathroom?