

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
- Hearing and vision impairment
- Poor nutrition and lack of activity
- History of falls

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

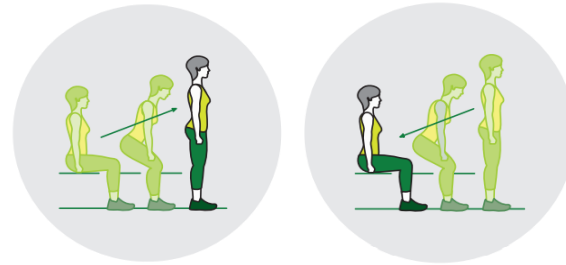
Most falls are preventable! Here are some ways to reduce your risk:

- Be physically active
- Have your medications reviewed by your healthcare provider
- Manage your chronic conditions
- Have your vision and hearing checked annually
- Make necessary home modifications
- Talk to your healthcare provider about falls and if you have a fear of falling

CHAIR RISE EXERCISE

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

1. Sit toward the front of a sturdy chair with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart.
2. Rest your hands on either side of you, keeping your back and neck straight and chest slightly forward.
3. Breathe in slowly. Lean forward and feel your weight on the front of your feet.
4. Breathe out, and slowly stand up, using your hands as little as possible.
5. Pause for a full breath in and out.
6. Breathe in as you **slowly** sit down.
7. Breathe out.
8. Repeat this exercise 10-15 times. If this is too much, work up to this number over time.



*Check with your healthcare provider as this exercise may not be suitable for everyone

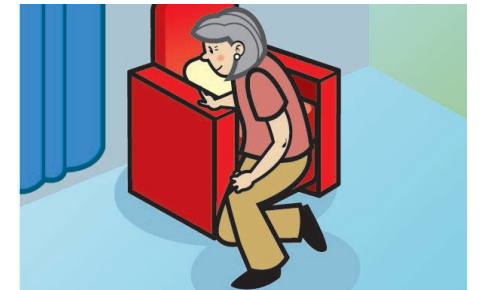
GETTING UP SAFELY

If you fall, stay as calm as possible and take deep breaths to relax. Remain still on the floor for a few moments and decide if you are hurt. Getting up too fast or in the wrong way could cause injury.

If you think you can get up without help:

1. Roll over onto your side. Rest while your body and blood pressure adjust.
2. Pull your knees toward your body and place your hand on the ground in front of your chest.
3. Push yourself into a 'table' position.
4. 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. Slowly turn around and sit on the chair.

If you are hurt or cannot get up on your own, ask someone for help or call 911. Carrying a mobile or portable phone with you as you move about your house could make it easier to call someone if you live alone or need assistance. An emergency response system, which lets you push a button on a special necklace or bracelet to call for help, is another option.



QUESTIONS FOR 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. **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.
3. **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.
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 improve strength, balance, flexibility, and bone mass. Tai Chi and A 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 and clutter
- Coil or tape wires and cords to the wall
- Secure rugs and carpets to the floor with double-sided tape (or remove)
- Do not use floor wax
- Remove low chairs that are difficult to sit in and get out of easily

STAIRS AND STEPS

- Keep objects off the stairs
- Fix broken or uneven steps
- Fix loose handrails, or put in new ones on both sides of the stairs
- Install an overhead light and light switch at the top and bottom of the stairs
- Apply reflective tape to the bottom and top of the stairs

KITCHEN

- Keep things you use often on the lower shelves (about waist high)
- Keep a Vial of Life or current list of health information on your fridge in the event of an emergency
- Never use a chair as a step stool

BEDROOM

- Adjust bed height to a comfortable position

LIGHTING

- Place a lamp close to the bed where it's easy to reach
- Install a nightlight so you can see where you're walking (some nightlights go on by themselves after dark)
- Replace burnt out light bulbs

CLOTHING/ACCESSORIES

- Wear shoes that have a thin, non-slip sole
- Wear pants and dresses that have been hemmed so they don't touch the floor
- Carry a mobile or portable phone with you at all times
- Consider an emergency response system

BATHROOMS

- Put a non-slip rubber mat on the floor of the tub or shower
- Install grab bars next to and inside the tub, and next to the toilet
- Consider using a raised toilet seat, padded shower seat, and/or handheld shower head

OUTDOORS

- Repair cracks and gaps in the sidewalk or driveway
- Trim shrubbery along paths to the door

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

