

Your Care Instructions

Getting around your home safely can be a challenge if you have injuries or health problems that make it easy for you to fall. Loose rugs and furniture in walkways are among the dangers for many older people who have problems walking or who have poor eyesight. People who have conditions such as arthritis, osteoporosis or dementia also have to be careful not to fall.

You can make your home safer with a few simple measures.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor or nurse call line if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

Taking care of yourself

- You may get dizzy if you do not drink enough water. To prevent dehydration, drink plenty of fluids, enough so that your urine is light yellow or clear like water. Choose water and other caffeine-free clear liquids. If you have kidney, heart or liver disease and have to limit fluids, talk with your doctor before you increase the number of fluids you drink.
- Exercise regularly to improve your strength, muscle tone and balance. Walk if you can, but swimming may be a good choice if you cannot walk easily.
- Have your vision and hearing checked each year or any time you notice a change. If you have trouble seeing and hearing, you might not be able to avoid objects and could lose your balance.
- Know the side effects of the medicines you take. Ask your doctor or pharmacist whether the medicines you take can affect your balance. For example, sleeping pills or sedatives can affect your balance.
- Limit the amount of alcohol you drink. Alcohol can impair your balance and other senses.
- Ask your doctor whether calluses or corns on your feet need to be removed. If you wear loose-fitting shoes because of calluses or corns, you can lose your balance and fall.
- Talk to your doctor if you have numbness in your feet.

Preventing falls at home

- Remove raised doorway thresholds, throw rugs and clutter. Repair loose carpet or raised areas in the floor.
- Move furniture and electrical cords to keep them out of walking paths.
- Use non-skid floor wax and wipe up spills right away, especially on ceramic tile floors.
- If you use a walker or cane, put rubber tips on it. If you use crutches, clean the bottoms of them regularly with an abrasive pad, such as steel wool.
- Keep your house well lit, especially stairways, porches and outside walkways. Use night-lights in areas such as hallways and washrooms. Add extra light switches or use remote switches (such as switches that go on or off when you clap your hands) to make it easier to turn lights on if you have to get up during the night.
- Install sturdy handrails on stairways.
- Move items in your cabinets so that the things you use most are located on the lower shelves (about waist level).
- Keep a cordless phone and a flashlight with new batteries by your bed. If possible, put a phone in each of the main rooms of your house, or carry a cell phone in case you fall and cannot reach a phone. You can wear a device around your neck or wrist that sends a signal for help at the press of a button.
- Wear low-heeled shoes that fit well and give your feet good support. Use footwear with non-skid soles, and check the heels and soles of your shoes for wear. Repair or replace worn heels or soles.
- Do not wear socks without shoes on wood floors.
- Walk on the grass when the sidewalks are slippery. If you live in an area that gets snow and ice in the winter, sprinkle salt on slippery steps and sidewalks.

Preventing falls in the bath

- Install grab bars and non-skid mats inside and outside your shower or tub and near the toilet and sinks.
- Use shower chairs and bath benches.
- Use a hand-held shower head that will allow you to sit while showering.
- Get into a tub or shower by putting the weaker leg in first. Get out of a tub or shower with your strong side first.
- Repair loose toilet seats and consider installing a raised toilet seat to make getting on and off the toilet easier.
- Keep your washroom door unlocked while you are in the shower.

For 24/7 nurse advice and general health information, call Health Link at 811.

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