

# Preventing Falls at Home

Information for Older Adults, Families and Caregivers

Read This Pamphlet to Learn About:

- The Dangers of Falls
- When You Are at Risk for a Fall
- How You Can Help Prevent Falls at Home



# WHAT ARE THE DANGERS OF FALLS?

Falls are the leading cause of injury among older Canadians and are largely preventable. Fall injuries are a serious health concern as they can lead to disability, chronic pain, loss of independence and a reduced quality of life.

## FACTS ABOUT FALLS



**OLDER CANADIANS FALL EACH YEAR.**



**OF THOSE WHO FALL ARE SERIOUSLY INJURED.**



**HOSPITALIZATIONS DUE TO INJURIES AMONG OLDER PERSONS ARE BECAUSE OF FALLS.**



**OF FALLS-RELATED HOSPITALIZATIONS OCCUR AS A RESULT OF FALLS AT HOME.**



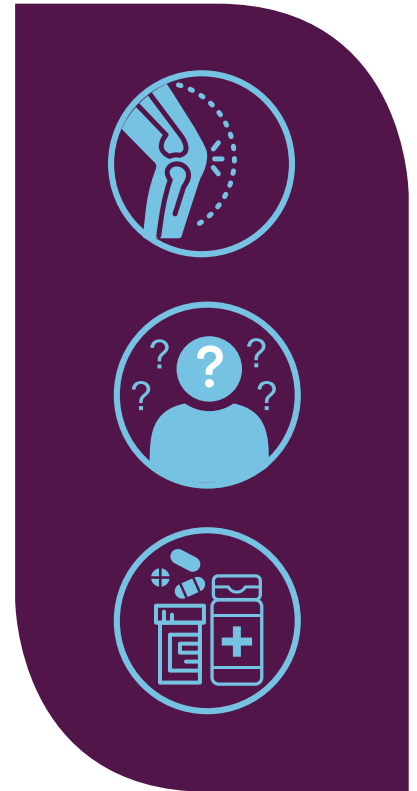
**FALLS TREATED IN HOSPITALS INVOLVED BROKEN (FRACTURED) HIPS.**

# AM I AT RISK OF A FALL?

Ask yourself these questions. If you answer yes to one or more, you may be at a higher risk of falling.

- Have you had a fall in the last 6 to 12 months?
- Do you ever feel dizzy?
- Do you ever lose your balance?
- Do you have weak muscles or stiff joints?
- Do you have problems seeing or hearing?
- Do you have foot problems?
- Are you ever short of breath?
- Do you have to rush to the bathroom?
- Do you have trouble remembering or concentrating on things?
- Do you walk in places that are uneven, cluttered, slippery or icy?
- Do you take 4 or more medications a day?
- Do you drink alcohol?

Talk to your health care provider about how you can reduce many of these factors that put you at risk of falling at home.



# WHAT CAN I DO TO PREVENT FALLS?

Falling in your home can be prevented. By making some of these changes, you can lower your risk of falling:



## **REGULAR EXERCISE & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

Exercising regularly can help prevent falls by making your bones and muscles stronger and more flexible. Exercise can also improve your balance and coordination.



## **HAVE YOUR MEDICATIONS REVIEWED**

Review your medications with your health care provider or pharmacist, including over-the-counter medications. Some medications, or combinations of medications, can lead to dizziness and can cause you to fall.



## **HAVE YOUR VISION & HEARING CHECKED**

Have regular check-ups by an eye doctor, at least once a year. Poor vision can increase your chances of falling. If you have problems hearing you should consult a hearing specialist too.



## **MAKE YOUR HOME SAFER**

50% of falls happen at home. Make your home safer by removing tripping hazards, improving lighting, and keeping important items in close reach. An Occupational Therapist (OT) Home Safety Assessment can help you understand how to make your home safer.

# REGULAR EXERCISE CAN HELP PREVENT FALLS

Regular physical activity and exercise is beneficial to staying physically and mentally healthy as we age and can greatly reduce the risk of falls.

Older adults should aim to **exercise for 30 minutes per day**. There are many exercises or daily activities you can incorporate into your routine to stay healthy and active.

## STAYING PHYSICALLY ACTIVE

You can incorporate the activities below into your routine to stay healthy and active:

- Walking
- Light jogging
- Dance classes
- Water aerobics
- Chair exercises
- Yoga
- Tai Chi
- Stretching exercises
- Gardening
- Walking your dog
- Taking the stairs instead of the elevator

Always check with your health care provider before starting a new exercise program to make sure this is the best type of exercise for you.



# CARING FOR YOUR HEALTH

Medications or combinations of different types of medications, vision problems, or other underlying health issues can increase your chances of falling.

Always check with your health care provider if you feel dizzy, have balance problems, or feel at risk of falling.

## DISCUSS WITH YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER:

- Have your health care provider check your blood pressure, eyesight and hearing quality.
- Review your medicines regularly. Always follow the instructions your health care provider gives you about taking your medicines. Always discuss any over-the-counter medications with your health care provider.
- Have your vision checked at least once a year. If you have health conditions such as glaucoma or cataracts, this will limit your vision. Poor vision can increase the risk of falls.
- Hearing loss can increase the likelihood of falls. If you believe you are experiencing hearing problems, talk to your health care provider who may refer you to a hearing specialist if necessary.
- Ask your health care provider about technologies available, such as Personal Emergency Response Services (PERS), which can help individuals gain assistance faster in an emergency. This can increase the users' sense of security and confidence, and reduce anxiety about falling.

# MAKE YOUR HOME SAFER

There are many things you can do to make your home safer and reduce the risk of falling:



## KEEP SPACES CLEAR

Remove things you can trip over (like books, clothes, shoes). Remove small throw rugs, or secure rugs with tape to stop them from slipping.



## KEEP IMPORTANT ITEMS CLOSE

Keep items you use most often in cabinets that are easy to reach without using a step stool or chair. If you use a cane or mobility aid, keep this close when reaching for any items.



## KEEP AREAS YOU USE WELL LIT

Improve lighting in your home to ensure you can see your path when walking, especially at night. Night lights can be helpful for this.



## INSTALL HANDRAILS & GRAB BARS

If needed, install grab bars next to your toilet or shower. Always ensure your home has handrails on all staircases.



## WEAR NON-SLIP SHOES

Wear non-slip shoes both inside and outside of the house. Avoid wearing slippers as they have less traction and could cause you to slip.

# SCHEDULE AN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST (OT) HOME SAFETY ASSESSMENT

Get an OT Home Safety Assessment if you have fallen or are at risk of falling. An OT can perform a full home assessment to advise you on ways you can make your home safer.

## IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY

Always have a plan to call for help if you fall. Some things you can do in case you fall:



Put telephones in rooms you use most often or carry a cordless phone with you wherever you go.



Keep a list of emergency telephone numbers on or in your phone.



Consider getting a Personal Emergency Response Service like the TELUS Health LivingWell Companion, which provides access to live 24/7 emergency support at the push of a button or through an automatic fall detection feature.

For more information visit [telus.com/livingwell](https://telus.com/livingwell) or call 1-844-697-1995.



## WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

The Public Health Agency of Canada has created two related resources for older Canadians:



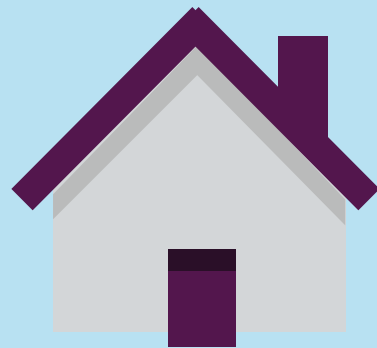
### **PHYSICAL ACTIVITY TIPS FOR OLDER ADULTS**

<https://bit.ly/3wA9ff5>



### **A GUIDE TO HOME SAFETY FOR SENIORS**

<https://bit.ly/30bnKda>



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