

Fall Prevention: Minimize Your Risk

Every 11 seconds, an older adult is taken to the emergency room for a fall-related injury.

Falls are a serious problem in the senior population, with 25% of older Americans suffering one every year. Falls are also the No. 1 cause of fatal and non-fatal injuries in those 65 and older, resulting in hip fractures, broken bones and head injuries. which is why taking steps to prevent them is so important.

According to the National Council on Aging (NCOA), many falls are preventable. NCOA recommends the following to help minimize your risk of a fall.

- **Ask for a fall risk assessment.** Your healthcare provider should be able to arrange one for you.
- **Fall-proof your home.** This includes removing throw rugs, installing grab bars and rails in the bathroom, keeping hallways and walkways clear, and increasing the lighting in your home. An occupational therapist is often a good resource to look for things and make recommendations that you might not routinely consider.
- **Find a fall-prevention program.** These classes can help you improve your balance, strength and flexibility.
- Get your vision and hearing checked. It is important to be able to see and hear any potential hazards around you.
- **Have your pharmacist or physician check your medications.** Some prescriptions may cause dizziness, balance problems or other side effects that put you at risk for a fall.

When a fall does occur

If you do fall, it is important to stay calm. Move your arms and legs to see if you have any pain or injuries. If you are able to get up safely, do it slowly by rolling onto your hands and knees, or crawl to the nearest stable structure such as a bed, bathtub or chair. Place one foot flat on the floor and hold on to the furniture or fixture, then brace yourself and use both hands to support yourself as you rise slowly. Be sure to sit down, rest, drink some water and seek medical attention if needed.

If you are unable to move or cannot get up, call out or bang on the floor or wall to get someone's attention. If no one is within earshot, try to crawl to a phone and call for help.

If you live alone, you may want to consider a wearable alert system that can signal for help if you do take a fall. Just knowing that assistance can be summoned in moments may be worth the expense and peace of mind.

Concerned about falling? SilverSneakers can help! SilverSneakers offers virtual Balance Builder classes online covering a variety of topics such as balance, stability and strength yoga. There is even a fall prevention video for learning all the moves you can make to help prevent a fall. Check out the videos here: silversneakers.com/learn/ondemand/. No additional cost - SilverSneakers is part of your plan benefits!



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