



Fall Prevention Tips

Each year millions of people, age 65 and up, fall. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, one out of five falls causes serious injury such as a broken bone or head injury. In 2014, Michigan residents spent 1.5 billion dollars treating injuries sustained from falls. Luckily, suffering from a fall does not have to be an inevitable part of the aging process. Knowing and understanding the reasons for falls can lower your risk.

Complete a home safety checklist. Assess your home and address some of the most common causes of falls:

- Keep walkways free of clutter
- Ensure power cords are secured and not in walking paths
- Have sufficient lighting. Add night lights in the bedroom and bathroom. Consider keeping a flashlight next to the bed
- Replace any and all throw rugs with rugs that have non-slip backing or use carpet tape to firmly secure the rugs
- Watch out for pets! Our furry friends and their toys can end up under our feet and create a fall hazard
- Add grab bars to bathroom
- Install handrails on both sides of stairways

Wear sturdy, supportive footwear. Avoid flipflops & backless slippers that can slide off accidentally and become a tripping hazard.

Keep your cell phone with you at all times. Having a cell phone with you can be a lifesaver! Just throw it in your pocket when working in the garden or going to the basement to do laundry.

Stay active. Limiting activity for fear of falling, actually increases the risk. Isolation and reduced activity causes loss of muscle tone and physical skills like balance. Tai Chi is a great low impact exercise that can improve balance and keep you moving.

Communicate with your health provider. Keep them informed on any recent falls or if you begin feeling unsteady. Discuss all the medications you are currently taking; know what each one is for and how much you take. Keeping your doctor in the loop can help them identify risk factors and you can work together to prevent a future fall.

If you fall – tell someone. Even falls that don't seem serious can have complications like head injuries or broken bones. People taking blood thinners or Aspirin should see a doctor immediately after a fall, as they are at higher risk for brain injury.

Attend a class about fall prevention. Look for classes like Matter of Balance or ThinkFirst to Prevent Falls. These classes provide in depth education about older adult falls, including brain anatomy, nutrition, prevention, exercise, and so much more. They are great for adults over 65 and their families. Classes can be located by contacting your Area Agency on Aging or your health system's Injury Prevention Coordinator.

Many falls can be prevented by utilizing the simple steps above. For more information and tips on fall prevention visit the Center for Disease Control and Prevention website at cdc.gov/homeandrecreational/safety/falls.

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References:

Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2017, February 10). *Older Adult Falls*.

<https://www.cdc.gov/homeandrecreationalsafety/falls/index.html>

National Council on Aging. *Matter of Balance*. <https://www.ncoa.org/resources/program-summary-a-matter-of-balance/>

ThinkFirst National Injury Prevention Foundation (2019). *ThinkFirst to prevent falls*. <https://www.thinkfirst.org/thinkfirst-prevent-falls-0>