



**You CAN
prevent falls!**

The facts

- Falls are the leading cause of injury among older Canadians.
- 20-30% of seniors experience one or more falls each year.
- Falls are the cause of 85% of seniors' injury-related hospitalizations.
- Falls are the cause of 95% of all hip-fractures.
- 50% of all falls causing hospitalization happen at home.

Protect yourself

Anyone can fall. But as we age, our risk of falling becomes greater. That's the bad news. The good news is that falls can be prevented. The first step to avoiding falls is to understand what causes them. For example, poor balance, decreased muscle and bone strength, reduced vision or hearing, and unsafe conditions in and around your home can increase your chance of falling. Staying safe and on your feet is a matter of taking some steps to protect yourself.

You **can** prevent falls by making the needed adjustments to your home and lifestyle, and by making sure you eat well, stay fit, and use whatever devices will facilitate your daily life while keeping you safe. Your independence and well-being are at stake. Take action!



Your home

Bathroom

- Ensure that you have non-slip surfaces in the tub and shower.
- Install grab bars by the toilet and bath to help you sit and stand. Make sure they are well anchored.
- Use a raised toilet seat, and a bath seat in the shower, if you need them.
- Wipe up moisture or spills immediately.



Living room and bedroom

- Reduce clutter! Get rid of loose wires and cords as well as any other obstacles.
- Consider using a cordless phone to avoid rushing to answer.
- Have good lighting throughout the house and install night lights.
- Make sure the path is clear between the bedroom and bathroom.
- Scatter mats are tripping hazards. Get rid of them or make sure they are non-slip.
- Move slowly out of your bed or chair. Getting up suddenly can make you dizzy.

Kitchen

- Store kitchen supplies and pots and pans in easy-to-reach locations.
- Store heavy items in lower cupboards.
- Use a stable step stool with a safety rail for reaching high places.
- Always wipe up any spills immediately to prevent slipping.
- If you use floor wax, use the non-skid kind.
- Ask for help with tasks that you feel you can't do safely.

Your health



Stairs

- Make sure your stairs are well lit.
- Have solid handrails on both sides of the stairway.
- Remove your reading glasses when you go up or down the stairs.
- Never rush up or down the stairs. It's a major cause of falls.

Exterior

- Keep front steps and walkway in good repair and free of snow, ice and leaves.
- Keep front entrance well lit.
- Put gardening implements such as hoses and rakes away when not using them.



Eat healthy meals

- Nutritious meals keep up strength, resistance and balance. Eat lots of vegetables and fruits.
- Don't skip meals. It can cause weakness and dizziness.



Keep fit

- Engage in physical activity every day. It's your best defence against falls.
- Walk. Try Tai Chi. Do what you can to maintain your flexibility and balance.
- Build your muscle and bone strength by doing "resistance" activities or exercises (such as weight lifting). Consult your doctor before you embark on an exercise program.
- Have your hearing and vision checked regularly.

Use medication wisely

- Ask your doctor or pharmacist about possible side effects of prescription or over-the-counter medication.
- Read directions carefully so you're aware of potential reactions with other medications.
- If your medication causes dizziness or sleepiness, adjust your activities so you aren't at risk of falling.
- Don't mix alcohol and medications. Alone or in combination with drugs, alcohol can cause falls.

Use safety aids

- Don't be embarrassed to use aids to daily living—they can keep you safe and active.
- Wear your glasses and hearing aid.
- Consider using a walker or cane. If you use a cane, make sure that it's the correct height and that it's rubber-tipped for safety.
- Appropriate footwear is important. Comfortable shoes that provide good support can help to prevent falls.
- Find out about other gadgets that can make your life safer: reachers, anti-skid soles, hip protectors, etc.
- Use them!



Take action!
You CAN prevent falls!

If you fall...

- Try to land on your buttocks to prevent more serious injuries.
- Don't rush to get up. Make sure you are not injured before trying to get up or letting others help you get up.
- Don't let the fear of falling again prevent you from being active. Inactivity creates an even greater risk of falling.

For more information

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Other publications

- *Seniors' Falls in Canada: Second Report*
- *The Safe Living Guide—A guide to home safety for seniors*
- *Bruno and Alice—A love story in twelve parts about seniors and safety*
- *12 steps to stair safety at home*
- *Stay safe! (poster)*
- *If you fall or witness a fall, do you know what to do?*
- *What to do after a fall... (poster)*

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