

# Preventing Falls at Home

Information for patients and families



**Preventing falls starts with you!**



Patient Education



**UHN**

Toronto General  
Toronto Western  
Princess Margaret  
Toronto Rehab  
Michener Institute

## Important facts about falls



Many serious falls happen at home. It's important to know what you can do to stay safe and reduce your risk of falling.

### Did you know?

- ✓ About 3 out of 10 adults over age 65 and living in the community fall at least once a year.
- ✓ After a fall, older Canadian adults spend about 22 days in hospital.
- ✓ Almost all broken hip (about 9 out of 10) are related to falls.
- ✓ Falls are expensive. The Canadian healthcare system spends about \$8.7 billion dollars a year on falls and injury from falls.

**Remember:** The good news is many falls **can** be prevented.

### What can happen after a fall?

Sometimes a fall can cause a serious injury like a broken bone.

Even when falls do not cause physical injuries, there can be negative effects. For example, a person may become less confident after a fall. They may not take part in their everyday activities or they may become afraid of falling again. A fear of falling can make a person more likely to fall in the future.

## Am I at risk for falling?

Ask yourself these questions. If you answer **yes** to any of them, you may be at a higher risk of falling.

- Do you ever feel dizzy?
- Do you take 4 or more medicines a day?
- Do you drink alcohol or take non-prescribed medications?
- Do you have foot problems?
- Do you have weak muscles or stiff joints?
- Do you have to rush to the bathroom?
- Do you have problems seeing or hearing?
- Do you have trouble concentrating?
- Are you ever short of breath?
- Do you walk in places that are uneven, slippery or icy?
- Do you ever lose your balance?
- Have you had a fall, or slipped or tripped in the last year?
- Are you afraid of falling?
- Do you have one or more chronic physical or mental health conditions, such as glaucoma or dementia?

Talk to your health care provider about how you can reduce some of these risks.

## How can I help prevent falls at home?

Use these tips to help you stay safe at home:

### Caring for your health

- Have your health care provider check your blood pressure, eyesight and ears regularly.
- Review your medicines and vitamins regularly with your health care provider. Always speak with your doctor or nurse practitioner before making changes to your medications.
- Keep an up-to-date list of your medications that you take and how you take them. Bring this list with you when you see your doctor, nurse practitioner or pharmacist.
- Speak to your doctor or nurse practitioner if you feel dizzy or drowsy.
- Use the same pharmacy for all of your prescription and non-prescription medicines. Many pharmacies will keep track of your medicines and tell you about any problems or side effects. Your pharmacist can help make sure it's safe to take any new medicine with others you are already taking.
- Speak to your health care provider if you are using cannabis products, drinking alcohol or taking non-prescribed medications.
- Get up slowly from your bed or chair. This can prevent a sudden drop in your blood pressure and dizziness. Ask for help if you need it.
- Do exercises that improve your strength and balance. Stretching and walking are good examples. You can do strength exercises while sitting to keep yourself stable.



Talk to your doctor or nurse before starting an exercise program.

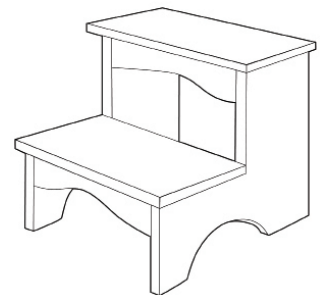
If you would like to join an exercise program near you, call **211** to reach the **Toronto Community and Social Services Help Line**.

## Moving around

- Wear shoes that fit well and have non-slip soles. Don't wear socks on tiles or wooden floors.
- Keep electrical cords out of the way, or attach them to the floor.
- Use non-slip mats under any loose rugs or mats.
- Make sure there are handrails on both sides of the stairs.
- If you need one, use a walking cane that fits well and has rubber feet. Replace the feet when they get worn out. Get a physiotherapist, occupational therapist or other health care professional to check and make sure the cane is the right height for you.
- Make sure rooms and hallways have enough light. Light switches should be easy to reach. Use night lights in the bathroom and hallways.
- If you have a pet, make sure they are not near your feet before you stand from sitting or begin walking.

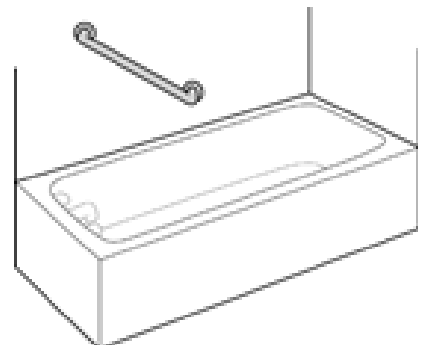
## In the kitchen

- Keep things you need within reach.
- Use step stools with rubber feet to reach higher items. Don't stand on chairs.
- Use long-handled mops to clean spills. You can also buy tools like reachers or grabbers to help you avoid bending or reaching too far.



## In the bathroom

- Use a non-skid bath mat in and outside the bathtub or shower.
- Install a grab bar in the shower or bathtub.
- Use a bath bench.



## Outside of the home and in your community

- Scan your environment for hazards. For example, check for dim outdoor lighting and damaged, slippery or cluttered stairs, pathways and decks.
- Avoid slippery surfaces when you walk outside your home, especially in the winter.
- Report community hazards to your property manager or municipality.
  - Call 311 to reach “Toronto at Your Service” to report issues with road, sidewalks, bus stops or walkways.
  - Contact Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) to see if you are eligible for services offered by Wheel-Trans. Call customer service at 416 393 4111 or email [wtcs@ttc.ca](mailto:wtcs@ttc.ca).



### **In case of emergency**

- Have a plan for help if you fall.
- Put telephones in rooms that you use often or keep your cell phone within reach at all times.
- Keep a list of emergency telephone numbers by the phone or stored in your cell phone.
- Buy a monitoring device or other similar products if you live alone and are at a high risk of falling.

**Things I will do to prevent falls:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Adapted from: RNAO Nurses Association of Ontario Nursing Best Practice Guidelines and Fraser Health Authority



**Have feedback about this document?**

Please fill out our survey. Use this link: [bit.ly/uhn-pe](https://bit.ly/uhn-pe)

Visit [www.uhnpatienteducation.ca](http://www.uhnpatienteducation.ca) for more health information. Contact [pfep@uhn.ca](mailto:pfep@uhn.ca) to request this brochure in a different format, such as large print or electronic formats.

© 2020 University Health Network. All rights reserved. Use this material for your information only. It does not replace advice from your doctor or other health care professional. Do not use this information for diagnosis or treatment. Ask your health care provider for advice about a specific medical condition. You may print 1 copy of this brochure for non-commercial and personal use only.