

Fall Safety

Spinal cord injuries can affect your strength and your reaction speed, which can put you at higher risk of having a fall. Certain things can be done to prevent falls. Knowing what to do when you have a fall can help you stay safe and get help quickly.

Planning for falls

Knowing that you are at risk for falls allows you to prepare. Carry a cell phone or a portable phone with you at all times. Having a phone in case of a fall can make sure you get help quickly. Having phones installed in extra rooms like your bathroom is another option. You can also wear a medical alarm service button. This allows you to call for help if you can't get to a phone.



Making your home safe

Having a safe home is important to prevent falls. This includes reducing clutter and having good lighting. Railings in stair cases and hallways can help you move around the house more safely. Your therapist can give you ideas about what can make your home safer while meeting your needs. Here are a few examples of things that can be done:

Living Room

- Remove small area rugs or secure them to the floor with tape.
- Remove or secure wheels on furniture.

Bathroom

- Install a raised toilet seat if you have trouble standing from low seats.
- Install grab bars around the tub and toilet.
- Use an anti-slip mat or a shower seat in the tub.
- Use a portable, hand-held shower head.

Contact your Physiotherapist for more information.

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How can you prevent a fall?

Here are some tips on things can do to prevent falls:

- Wear rubber soled, closed heel footwear for all transfers, standing, and walking.
- Be aware of your energy level and don't push yourself beyond your limits.
- When using equipment, be sure it is set up and is being used correctly.
- Stop and get your balance after changing positions.
- Practice new transfer techniques with your therapist before doing them alone.
- Exercise often to keep or improve your strength.

What can put you at higher risk of falls?

Different things can increase your risk of falling. Be careful if these factors affect you:

- Some medications
- Low blood pressure
- Wearing a neck brace
- Being tired
- Muscle spasms
- Cluttered environment

What do I do after a fall?

If you have a fall, don't try to get up right away. Stay calm and check yourself to see if you have any injuries. If you are injured, ask someone nearby for help or to help you call a friend or family member. If you have a serious injury (e.g. broken bone), call 911 for help. If you don't have any injuries, try to get up yourself or with help. If you are alone, try to crawl to a nearby phone for help. If possible, cover yourself with something warm while you wait for help.



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How do I stand up from the floor?

Getting up from the floor can be a challenge. With practice, many people are able to get up on their own or with the help of a firm surface or chair. If it is appropriate, your therapist will help you practice this skill. Do not try this for the first time by yourself unless it is an emergency. Pace yourself while doing this transfer by taking small breaks between each step.

1. Start by turning yourself onto your side or stomach.
2. First get yourself onto your elbows.
3. Move onto your hands and knees.
4. Hold onto a firm surface to help you stand up.
5. Push yourself up with your legs and arms.
6. Turn yourself gently and sit.



Tip: Carry a phone with you at all times. Even quick trips to the bathroom can result in a fall. Having a medical alarm service button also allows you to call for help.

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