

Home accidents are the number one cause of injuries in older adults. About half of all falls happen in the home. With some planning, you can take steps to make your home safe and prevent injuries.

The following things can help you learn more about protecting yourself against falls. There are also tips about identifying potential hazards and how you can fix them before an accident happens.

## Take care of yourself

- Maintain your strength, flexibility, and balance with regular physical activity. Regular physical activity is important in helping you stay healthy and strong. Walking is a great way to stay active. You can start out slowly and build up to 30 minutes each day. Even if you need to walk with an assistive walking device, try to walk for about 30 minutes on most days of the week.

before an accident happens.

## Be safe when getting in and out of bed

- Change positions slowly when getting out of bed. Sit on the side of your bed for a minute before getting up, or stand for a minute before you start to move.
- Don't put off the urge to go to the bathroom. This can lead to an urgent need to move too quickly to get to the bathroom later.
- Stop drinking liquids a couple of hours before going to bed. This will lessen your need to get up during the night. If you take diuretic medicine (water pills), take them early in the day.

## Prevent falls and injury

- Respect your limits.** Don't be afraid to ask for help or hire someone to do some of the jobs you used to do yourself such as climbing ladders, cleaning cupboards, or changing light bulbs. If you feel a little unsteady, use an assistive walking device, like a walker or a cane, to help you keep your balance and prevent a fall.

**Take your time.** Get up slowly after you've been sitting or lying down to avoid getting dizzy. When planning to go somewhere, leave enough time to get there so you won't have to rush if you're running late.

**Plan ahead.** Schedule your activities for times you are most likely to be alert and not feeling hungry, stressed, or upset.

## Fall proof your home

- Ask your doctor or pharmacist to review all the medicines you take at every visit and with each new prescription, including over-the-counter medicines. Some medicines, or combination of medicines, can make you sleepy or dizzy and increase your risk of falling.
- Have your eyes checked once every 2 years, unless your doctor recommends more frequent eye exams. Always wear your glasses or contact lenses if prescribed.
- Avoid wearing clothes that you can easily trip over or step on while walking or climbing stairs.
- Wear shoes with nonskid soles both inside and outside the house. Don't go barefoot or wear socks.
- Limit alcohol. Drinking alcoholic beverages slows brain activity, which affects your alertness, judgment, coordination, and reaction time.

## Fall proof your home

- Keep stairs and places where you walk clear. Remove things that might cause you to trip, such as papers, books, clothes, and shoes.
- If your stairs are carpeted, choose a pattern that doesn't hide the edges of the steps.
- Use double-sided tape on all rugs to keep them from slipping.
- Keep outside steps free of ice and snow in the winter.
- Put items you use a lot in cabinets that are easy to reach without needing a step stool.

- Wipe up spills as soon as they happen.  
Liquids make a floor slippery.
- Make sure you have enough light so you can easily see any obstacles that are in your way. Have light switches at both ends of all your stairways and halls, and within easy reach of your bed. Use night-lights in hallways and bathrooms.
- Use non-slip mats in the bathtub and on shower floor.
- Install grab bars next to the toilet and in the bathtub or shower.

## Preventing falls in your home:

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Take steps to protect yourself

- Prevent falls and injury
- Fall proof your home