

Preventing falls



Be sure to talk to your doctor if you're experiencing any of the following:

- Trouble with walking or balance
- Problems with your vision
- A recent fall
- Medication side effects that cause dizziness

Trips, falls, bruises and broken bones

What's really at risk?

Falls can lead to bruises, pulled muscles and broken bones. That might not seem like a big problem until you know what's really at risk. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one out of three older people falls each year.¹ Being hurt in a fall can threaten your ability to live independently, making it hard to do things like bathe and walk. One out of five falls causes a serious injury like a broken bone or head injury. Preventing falls may help you avoid a nursing home and live a longer, healthier life.

There's good news!

Falling is not inevitable, even as you get older. Falls can be prevented by taking a few simple steps. Talk to your doctor about steps you can take to reduce the chance you will fall or break a bone – or keep from falling again.

Take these steps to prevent trips and falls:

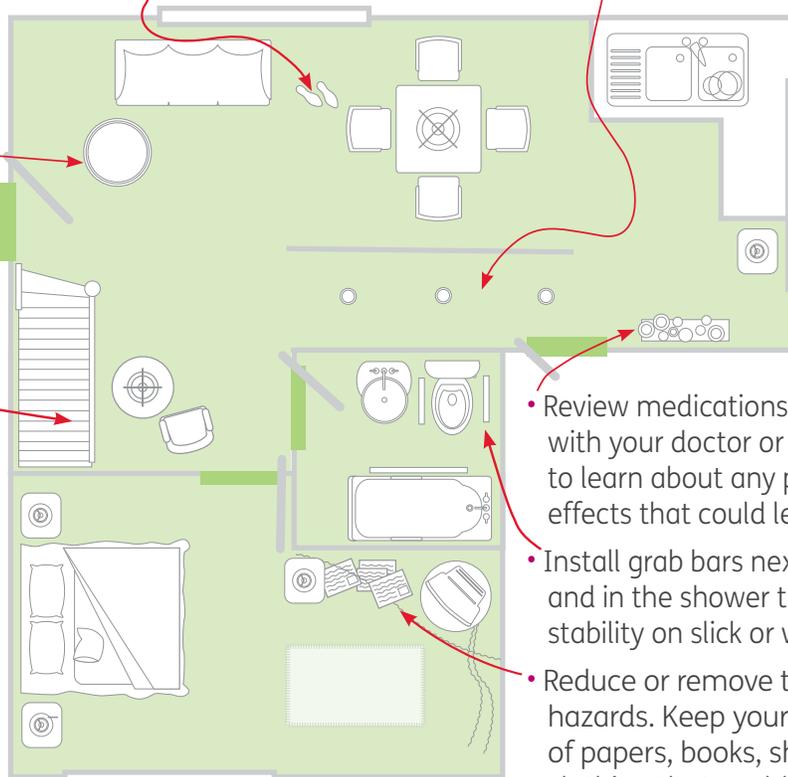
- 1. Get moving.** Better balance and more strength come with exercise. Do weight-bearing exercises such as walking, weight training, or climbing stairs regularly to maintain healthy bones and muscles. Exercises that strengthen your thigh and bottom muscles and improve your balance will help reduce your risk of falling.
- 2. Monitor your medications.** Do you take more than four? According to the National Institutes of Health, people who take four or more medicines – no matter what they are for – are more likely to fall.² Some medicines also can cause problems with balance. Have your doctor or pharmacist review your medications and discuss ways to reduce side effects or interactions.
- 3. Make sure you can see where you're going.** This might seem simple, but some people fall because they can't see well. Have your vision checked every year. Take reading glasses off before you take a step. Make sure areas are well-lit, and walk carefully if it's dark.
- 4. Get screened.** Talk to your doctor about a bone density test to help catch bone loss early. Review your diet with your doctor to ensure you're getting enough calcium and take a calcium supplement if your doctor recommends it.
- 5. Fall-proof your home.** Turn the page for helpful tips to make your home as safe as possible.



Is your home fall-proof?

More people fall in the home than anywhere else. Review the diagram below for hazards you can avoid and changes you can make to fall-proof your home.

- Wear rubber-soled or nonslip footwear that's comfortable, and fits correctly. Keep laces tightly tied, and if you have trouble tying laces, look for shoes with Velcro®.
- Arrange your furniture so it does not block walkways. Be sure that sofas and chairs are high enough so you can easily sit down and get up.
- Install handrails on both sides of stairwells. Be sure they are firmly fastened in place.
- Improve lighting. Place night-lights in hallways and bathrooms to guide your steps in the dark. Add brighter lighting to areas that are dark or dim.



Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; National Institutes of Health

¹Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2016). Important Facts about Falls. Retrieved from www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Falls/adultfalls.html.

²National Institutes of Health. (2013). Falls and Older Adults. Retrieved from nihseniorhealth.gov/falls/causesandriskfactors/01.html

- Review medications each year with your doctor or pharmacist to learn about any potential side effects that could lead to a fall.
- Install grab bars next to the toilet and in the shower to improve your stability on slick or wet surfaces.
- Reduce or remove tripping hazards. Keep your floors free of papers, books, shoes and clothing that could easily entangle your feet. Tape down or move any electrical or telephone cords. Remove area rugs or check that they have nonslip backings.

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