

Fall Prevention and Recovery



Every 11 seconds, an older adult is treated in the emergency room for a fall; every 19 minutes, an older adult dies from a fall, and every year 25% of Americans aged 65+ take a fall, according to the National Council on Aging. These falls result in more than 2.8 million injuries treated in emergency departments every year, including more than 800,000 hospitalizations and 27,700 deaths.

While falls can cause mild to severe injuries, such as breaking a hip and head injuries, and can increase the risk of early death, many falls can be prevented.

Be aware of medical problems that increase risk of falling

- Problems with heart rate and/or arrhythmia
- Cognitive impairment—related to dementia rather than normal aging
- Incontinence—losing control of urinating (peeing) or bowels (pooping)
- Depression
- Foot problems

Medication management

- Have your healthcare provider or pharmacist review your medicines for fall-related side effects.
- Use only one pharmacy where a pharmacist can keep track of your medication list.
- Tell your provider if you have side effects.
- Ask your provider about taking vitamin D supplements for muscle, bone and nerve health.

Examples of medicines that increase fall risk include:

- Depressants like alcohol and sleeping pills
- Stimulants like nicotine or caffeine
- Opioids or pain medicine
- Medicine that can cause sleepiness or confusion
- Medicine that can cause low blood pressure

What can you do?

- Do balance and strengthening exercises at least three times a week.
- Ask your doctor to do a fall risk screening and tell them if you have fallen recently.
- Always wear shoes that fit your feet well and have solid, non-skid soles.
- Have your vision checked by an eye doctor every year, and wear glasses if needed.
- Talk with your provider about whether physical therapy would be helpful to find out why you may have been falling more and how to prevent future falls.



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Make your home safe

- Make sure you have enough light in all rooms of your home.
- Place a lamp close to the bed.
- Use nightlights for improved safety with walking at night.
- Move furniture to make sure walkways are clear.
- Remove rugs, or use double-sided tape or nonslip backing so rugs do not slip.
- Pick up things on the floor or stairs.
- Coil and tape cords and wires next to the wall so you can't trip on them.
- Keep items in kitchen on lower shelves to avoid using chairs or a step stool to reach things.
- Have grab bars put in next to the shower and toilet.

What to do if you fall

Check yourself for major injuries. If you think you may have a major injury, do not get up without help.

FIND HELP

- Can you get someone's attention by shouting or banging?
- If you wear a personal safety alarm, press it.
- If your phone is within reach, make a call if possible.

GET COMFORTABLE

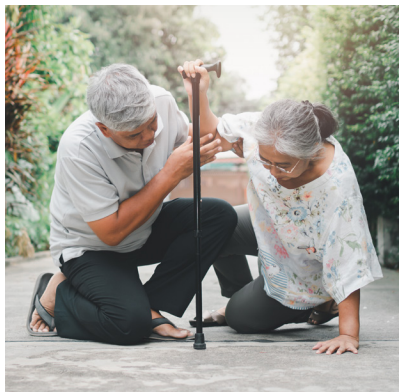
- Find a nearby pillow, cushion, or rolled up item of clothing to put under your head.

KEEP WARM

- Cover yourself with clothing, tablecloth or rug.

KEEP MOVING

- Change your position to keep from getting pressure sores.
- Move your joints to keep them from getting stiff and to help with circulation.
- If you have urinated (peed), try to roll away from the damp area to protect your skin.



How to get up if you are not injured and able

1. If you think you are not hurt, look for a chair, staircase, or other sturdy piece of furniture that is closest to you.
2. Roll onto your side by turning your head in the direction you want to roll, then move your shoulder and arm, followed by hip and leg.
3. Slowly push your upper body up.
4. Move to your hands and knees, and crawl to the chair or other sturdy furniture.
5. Put your hands on the chair and place one foot forward so it's flat on the floor, while other knee stays bent and on the floor.
6. Slowly push up from the floor with your hands and turn your body to sit in the chair.
7. Sit for a few minutes before trying to stand.
8. Even if you feel okay, tell someone what happened. You might not know that you are hurt.

Learn more

Contact your local community or senior center for information on exercise, fall prevention programs, and ways to help the safety in your home, or visit:

- stopfalls.org
- ncoa.org/older-adults/health/prevention/falls-prevention
- Search go.usa.gov/xN9XA for a list of fall prevention resources

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