

PREVENTING FALLS AT HOME

INFORMATION FOR OLDER ADULTS, FAMILIES,
AND CAREGIVERS



READ THIS PAMPHLET TO LEARN:

- The Dangers of Falls.
- When You Are at Risk for a Fall.
- How You Can Help Prevent Falls at Home.



Sinai Health System

HEALTHY AGEING AND GERIATRICS

WHAT ARE THE DANGERS OF FALLS?

Falls are the leading cause of injury in Canada for older adults, but are largely preventable. Fall injuries are also a serious health concern as they can lead to disability, chronic pain, a loss of independence and a reduced quality of life.



FALLS FACTS:



OLDER CANADIANS FALL EACH YEAR.



OF THOSE WHO FALL ARE SERIOUSLY INJURED.



FALLS TREATED IN HOSPITALS INVOLVED BROKEN (FRACTURED) HIPS.



OF FALLS-RELATED HOSPITALIZATIONS OCCUR AS A RESULT OF FALLS AT HOME.

AM I AT RISK FOR A FALL?

Ask yourself these questions. If you answer yes to one or more, you may be at a higher risk of falling.

- Have you had a fall in the last 6 to 12 months?
- Do you ever feel dizzy?
- Do you ever lose your balance?
- Do you have weak muscles or stiff joints?
- Do you have problems seeing or hearing?
- Do you have foot problems?
- Are you ever short of breath?
- Do you have to rush to the bathroom?
- Do you have trouble remembering or concentrating on things?
- Do you walk in places that are uneven, slippery or icy?
- Do you take 4 or more medications a day?
- Do you drink alcohol?



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

WHAT CAN I DO TO PREVENT FALLS?

Many falls can be prevented at home. By making some of these changes, you can lower your chances of falling:



REGULAR EXERCISE & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Exercising regularly can help prevent falls by making your bones and muscles stronger and more flexible. Exercise can also improve your balance and coordination.



HAVE YOUR MEDICATIONS REVIEWED

Review your medications with your health care provider or pharmacist, including over-the-counter medications. Some medications or combinations of medications can lead to dizziness and can cause you to fall.



HAVE YOUR VISION & HEARING CHECKED

Have regular check ups by an eye doctor, at least once a year. Poor vision can increase your chances of falling. If you have problems hearing you should consult a hearing specialist too.



MAKE YOUR HOME SAFER

50% of falls happen at home. Make your home safer by removing tripping hazards, improving lighting, and keeping important items in close reach. An occupational therapist led Home Safety Assessment can help you understand how to make your home safer.

REGULAR EXERCISE CAN HELP PREVENT FALLS

Regular physical activity and exercise is beneficial to staying physically and mentally healthy as we age and can greatly reduce the risk of falls.



Older adults should aim to exercise for **30 minutes per day**. There are many exercises or daily activities you can incorporate into your routine to stay healthy and active.

STAYING PHYSICALLY ACTIVE

You can incorporate the below activities into your routine to stay healthy and active:

- Walking
- Light Jogging
- Dancing Classes
- Water Aerobics
- Chair Exercises
- Yoga
- Tai Chi
- Stretching Exercises
- Gardening
- Walking your dog
- Taking the Stairs Instead of the Elevator



Always check with your health care provider before starting a new exercise program to make sure this is the best type of exercise for you.

CARING FOR YOUR HEALTH

Medications or combinations of different types of medications, vision problems, or other underlying health problems can increase your chances of falling. Always check with your health care provider if you feel dizzy, have balance problems, or feel at risk of falling.



DISCUSS WITH YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER

- Have your health care provider check your blood pressure, eyesight and hearing quality.
- Review your medicines regularly. Always follow the instructions your health care provider gives you about taking your medicines. Always discuss any over-the-counter medications with your health care provider.
- Have your vision checked at least once a year. If you have health conditions such as glaucoma or cataracts, this will limit your vision. Poor vision can increase the risk of falls.
- Hearing loss can increase the likelihood of falls. If you believe you are experiencing hearing problems, talk to your health care provider who may refer you to a hearing specialist if necessary.



MAKE YOUR HOME SAFER

There are many things you can do to make your home safer and reduce the risk of falling:



KEEP SPACES CLEAR

Remove things you can trip over (like books, clothes, shoes). Remove small throw rugs, or secure rugs with tape to stop them from slipping.



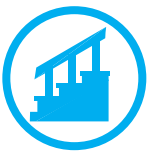
KEEP IMPORTANT ITEMS CLOSE

Keep items you use most often in cabinets that are easy to reach without using a step stool or chair. If you use a cane or mobility aid, keep this close when reaching for any items.



KEEP AREAS YOU USE WELL LIT

Improve lighting in your home to ensure you can see your path when walking, especially at night. Night lights can be helpful for this.



INSTALL HANDRAILS AND GRAB BARS

If needed, install grab bars next to your toilet or shower. Always ensure your home has handrails on all staircases.



WEAR NON-SLIP SHOES

Wear non-slip shoes both inside and outside of the house. Avoid wearing slippers as they have less traction and could cause you to slip.



HOME SAFETY ASSESSMENT

Get an OT Home Safety Assessment if you have fallen or are at risk of falling. An Occupational Therapist (OT) can perform a full home assessment to advise you on ways you can make your home safer.

IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY

Always have a plan to call for help if you fall. Some things you can do in case you fall:



PUT TELEPHONES IN ROOMS YOU USE MOST OFTEN OR CARRY A CORDLESS PHONE WITH YOU WHEREVER YOU GO.



KEEP A LIST OF EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS ON OR IN YOUR PHONE.



CONSIDER A MEDICAL ALERT SYSTEM LIKE LIFELINE IF YOU ARE AT RISK OF FALLING SO YOU CAN ACCESS HELP 24 HOURS A DAY, 7 DAYS A WEEK.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Philips Lifeline in Association with Sinai Health System at 1-800-799-0262

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

EXERCISE AND FALLS PREVENTION PROGRAMS

Older Adults (aged 65 and older) can join one of 2,000 free classes across Ontario to help maintain balance and strength to prevent falls.



Call 211 or the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) at 310-2222 (No Area Code Needed)



www.ontario.ca/page/exercise-and-falls-prevention-programs

HOME SAFETY ASSESSMENT

Get an OT Home Safety Assessment if you have fallen or are at risk of falling.

For information on OT Home Safety Assessments or to book one for your home, contact:



The Local Health Integration Network at 310-2222 (No Area Code Needed)

RELEVANT RESOURCES IN OUR SERIES

- Living Longer, Living Well – Your Guide to Healthy Ageing

ADDITIONAL HEALTH RESOURCES IN OUR SERIES:

- Calcium, Vitamin D and Bone Health
- Recognizing and Managing Hearing Loss
- How to Recognize and Manage Delirium
- How to Start the Conversation: Advance Care Planning
- General Tips for Memory Problems
- Improving Urinary Incontinence
- Improving Nutrition as You Age
- Managing Sleep in Older Adults
- Managing Caregiver Stress
- Managing Common Mental Health Conditions
- Managing Chronic Pain
- Safe Medication Use for Older Adults
- Substitute Decision Makers and Powers of Attorney

ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY RESOURCES IN OUR SERIES:

- Elder Abuse
- Meals on Wheels
- Housing Options for Older Adults
- Community Transportation Options
- How to Register for Wheel-Trans
- Driving Assessment Services
- Funding for Mobility Aids from the Assistive Devices Program

Visit www.sinaigeriatrics.ca/healtheducation for additional resources for older adults, families and caregivers.

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