

FALL RISKS FOR SENIORS

Physical risks include:

- Chronic illnesses or conditions, such as the effects of a stroke, Parkinson's disease, arthritis, heart disease, incontinence
- Taking multiple medications, particularly those that are known to increase the risk of falling. Examples are inappropriate use of antidepressants, tranquilizers and anti-hypertensives
- Acute illnesses like infections or unstable chronic diseases (e.g. diabetes, heart failure)
- Age-related sensory changes, such as poor eyesight or hearing, reduced sense of touch and ability to know the position or movement of a body part without looking
- Changes in mental alertness due to cognitive impairments, depression,

delirium, side effect of medications, consumption of alcohol, poor nutrition, dehydration or lack of sleep

- Mobility problems, including slower reflexes, muscle weakness, impaired balance and poor gait that includes swaying side to side when moving

Indoor risks include:

- Poorly lit stairs, ramps or doorways
- Stairs that are not uniform from top to bottom or those with narrow steps
- Stairs without handrails or marking on the edges of the steps
- Lack of, or incorrectly installed, grab bars in bathrooms
- Slippery floors, throw rugs, loose carpets
- Walking surfaces cluttered with objects like cords, pet dishes or

newspapers

- Toilet seats that are too low or too high
- Poorly maintained or improper use of mobility aids and equipment
- Doors with raised sills

Outdoor risks include:

- Uneven or cracked sidewalks
- Stairs without handrails
- Stairs without clear edge markings on all steps
- Poor lighting: either not enough or too much glare
- Snow, ice, wet leaves on stairs or walkways
- Unmarked curb edges or corners without curb ramps

- Long crosswalks without pedestrian islands
- Objects on sidewalks or walkways such as bike racks or garbage cans
- Controlled crosswalks with times too short for a safe walking pace

Risky behaviors include:

- Wearing loose fitting or worn out shoes, or shoes with thick soles
- Taking medications without a regular review for fall risk by a physician, pharmacist

- Consuming alcohol to the point of impaired judgment and/or balance
- Trying to get objects that are out of reach rather than asking for assistance
- Carrying heavy, awkward handbags

that can affect balance

- Not using assistive devices (walkers, canes, etc.) when needed or using them incorrectly

Social and economic risks include:

- Living alone without a way to access help
- Lack of social networks that lead to isolation and depression
- Insufficient income for safe living quarters or nutritional food
- Lack of access or knowledge on how to acquire needed health care services or health promotion information
- Poor eating habits, with low protein or inadequate fluids