

Seniors

Lowering Risk of Falling at Home

Stairs and Steps

- Make sure runner mats, carpeting or other floor covering on your stairs are well fastened
- Make sure there are solid handrails or banisters on both sides of the stairway
- Remove your reading glasses when you go up and down the stairs
- Never rush up and down the stairs, it is a major cause for falls
- Make sure you have light switches at the top and bottom of the stairs and that the stairs are well lit
- Make sure your stairs are in good repair and free of clutter and have a nonskid surface
- Mark the edge of all steps with contrasting colored non-skid tape or paint, not just the top and last step

Kitchen

- Place frequently used items in an easy-to-reach location with heavy items in lower

cupboards

- If you have good balance, use a stable step stool with a safety rail for reaching high places – otherwise ask for help. Do not stand on chairs or other unstable furniture
- Always wipe up any spills immediately to avoid slipping
- Avoid use of floor wax, or use the non-skid kind
- Ask for help with tasks that you feel you can't do safely

Living Areas

- Remove all throw rugs or scatter mats or use a nonskid backing with flat edges and make sure they are not in high traffic areas, or at the top or bottom of stairs
- Watch that your pets are not under foot. Put a bell on their collar so you know where they are
- Make sure all walking areas are clear of clutter, telephone or electrical cords and other obstacles
- Make sure all rooms, stairs and

balconies are well-lit with non-glare lighting

- Make sure you have non-slip surfaces on stairs, balconies, porches and patios
- Remove raised door sills where possible
- Consider acquiring a personal alarm device that you wear around your neck or wrist to call for immediate help by just pressing a button

Bedroom

- A light switch near your bedroom entrance is ideal. However, if this is not available try a motion sensitive or “clapper” device that automatically turns on the light
- Make sure there is a clear path from your bed to the bathroom
- Have a cordless phone near your bed
- Have a lamp beside your bed. There are lamps that you just touch the base to turn on

➤ Place night lights in the halls and bathroom in case you get up in the middle of the night

➤ Sit on the edge of your bed for a minute before getting up after a rest

Bathroom

➤ Use a rubber bath or shower mat, or a non-slip surface in your tub or shower

➤ Install grab bars by the toilet, bathtub and shower. Obtain the advise of an occupational or physical therapist on the correct type and placement of these devices

➤ Use a bath seat so you can take a shower or bath sitting down

➤ Keep an absorbent towel available to wipe up moisture or spills immediately

Exterior

➤ Keep front steps and walkway in good repair and free of snow, ice and leaves

➤ Keep your front entrance well lit - consider motion-sensitive lights

➤ Put away all gardening implements such as hoses and rakes when not in use

What can I personally do to decrease my risks of falling?

➤ Maintain an active and healthy lifestyle through appropriate exercise, good nutrition, regular physical checkups, and eye and ear exams

➤ If you have difficulty with mobility outside the home, ask your physiotherapist for an in-home exercise program to fit your needs

➤ For those who are active outside of the home, exercises to promote balance, strength and endurance are best for reducing falls

➤ Avoid rushing or carrying too much

➤ Consult a physiotherapist on the appropriate use of mobility aids and safety devices, such as a cane with spiked ends or shoes with ice grips

➤ Wear footwear that provides good support, with soles that have non-slip treads and are not too thick

➤ Have your family doctor or pharmacist do a regular review of your medications

➤ Be socially active by joining a community group and getting together with friends or family

If you do fall, do not ignore it or put it down to “just clumsiness or rushing”

Talk with your doctor about the circumstances of the fall to rule out any medical problems that caused the fall.