

SAFETY GUIDELINES  
**Tips to Avoid Falling**



Taking a tumble is the most frequently reported accident in the home. Reduce your chances of falling by making home improvements and changing some habits.

### Look Around Your Home

#### Floors

- Keep the areas where you walk free from clutter, electrical and telephone cords, and other small objects that might be easily overlooked.
- Secure loose rugs and mats with carpet tape or attach non-slip backing.
- For tile or wooden floors, avoid wax or use non-skid wax.
- Stairs should have flat surfaces. Repair holes or tears in carpeting and make sure it is well attached.
- Eliminate raised thresholds if possible or make them highly visible.

#### Lighting

- Make sure it's easy to turn on a light BEFORE entering every room in your home.
- Keep night lights turned on in hallways, bedrooms and bathrooms.
- Make sure you can easily turn on a light while in bed, before getting up.
- Place flashlights in convenient locations throughout your home, and check their batteries regularly.
- Light switches should be available at both the top and bottom of all stairs.
- Stairway lighting should be bright enough to clearly see all steps.

#### Bathrooms

- Tub and shower floors should have non-skid surfaces (strips or mats).
- Consider installing grab bars inside the bath or shower areas and next to the toilet.
- Consider installing a raised toilet seat.

#### Kitchen

- Frequently used items should be kept on lower shelves or other places that are easy to reach.
- You should have a sturdy step stool that is easy to use, preferably with a handrail. Do NOT stand on a chair to reach anything.

#### Stairs

- Sturdy handrails should be installed in all stairways and kept in good repair.

#### Outside Your Home

- Steps should have flat surfaces and be kept in good repair.

- All steps should have handrails, preferably on both sides of the steps.
- For better traction, steps can be painted with a mixture of sand and paint.
- During the winter, keep all entrances and sidewalks clear of snow and ice.
- All entrances should be well lit.
- Consider installing ramps (with handrails).

### Reconsider Personal Habits

- When walking, stay alert to unexpected obstacles — cords, furniture, pets, toys, etc.
- Avoid rushing to answer phones or the door.
- Take time to make sure your balance is steady before sitting up or standing.
- Wear shoes that are supportive and snug fitting, with low heels and non-slippery soles.
- Don't walk around with only socks on your feet.
- If carrying packages, make sure your view isn't blocked and that you have a hand free for opening doors, holding onto railings, or steadying your balance.
- Keep alert for uneven, broken or slippery pavement, sidewalks and ramps.
- Don't rush to cross streets, especially if wet or icy.
- Consider using a cane or walker.
- Find out if your medications might make you feel dizzy, drowsy or unsteady.
- If you live alone, keep in regular contact with friends, family or neighbors.

#### For Emergencies

- Keep emergency phone numbers posted where they can be easily seen. Consider whether they will be visible if you fall.
- Make sure you can easily reach a phone when in bed.

### If You Fall

1. Call 911 and other emergency contacts.
2. Stay warm by covering up with a blanket, coat, towel, rug, or whatever you can reach.
3. Consult a doctor even if you don't think you've been seriously hurt. Falling may indicate problems with medications or be a symptom of illness or a condition that needs treatment.