

# How to Prevent Falls at Home

Falls are the leading cause of injury among older Canadians, with 20-30% seniors experiencing one or more falls each year. Most falls happen at home because the person slips or stumbles. This guide has ideas for changes you can make to lower your risk of falling.

## Keeping your home safe

### Living spaces

- Use bright lighting
- Remove clutter in your hallways
- Keep the floor dry and clean up any spills quickly
- Try not to walk on wet floors
- Use non-skid floor wax when cleaning vinyl or wood floors
- Be mindful of uneven floors. If possible, speak to your landlord (if applicable) or a handyman/contractor who can help fix or maintain these.
- Area rugs are tripping hazards. Either get rid of area rugs or make sure they are non-slip.
- Keep items you use often within reach and avoid the use of step stools when possible.
- Keep electrical wires and cables out of the way

### In the bathroom

- Remove soap build-up in the shower and tub
- Install grab bars for your shower, tub and toilet
- Use non-slip bath mats
- Use a bath chair or bench and hand-held shower nozzle in the shower and tub
- Use a motion-censored nightlight in places that often gets dark

### In the bedroom

- Make sure your bedside light is easy to reach
- Avoid bedding that is too big and touches the floor
- Use a sturdy chair with side arms when you are getting dressed
- Move slowly out of your bed or chair. Getting up suddenly can make you dizzy

### On the stairs

- Avoid clutter
- Use handrails on both sides of the stairs
- Install non-slip treads if you can
- Add coloured paint on your first and last stair
- Try to go up and down the stairs as few times as possible



## Keeping yourself healthy

Seeing your health care providers regularly can help prevent falls. These health care providers can:

- Review your medication(s) to reduce your risk of falling
- Suggest ways to keep you safe
- Evaluate your strength, balance and walking
- Make a referral to your optometrist or ophthalmologist to check your eye sight and make sure your glasses prescription is up-to-date
- Help if you find that you have to go to the bathroom often or need help managing incontinence

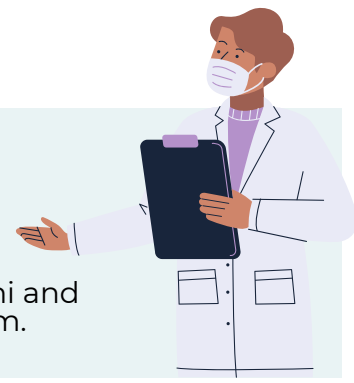
Eat healthy meals:

- Nutritious meals help to keep up strength, resistance and balance
- Eat lots of vegetables and fruits
- Don't skip meals - it can cause weakness and dizziness
- Drink enough water throughout the day in order to stay hydrated

## Staying active

Moving a bit every day can help prevent falls. You can:

- Use a cane or walker if recommended by your doctor, nurse or care provider
- Take your time standing up, sitting down, walking or climbing stairs
- Do regular strength and balance exercises. Consider a class like yoga or tai chi and speak to your doctor or nurse practitioner before starting an exercise program.
- Engage in physical activity every day. It's your best defense against falls



## Wearing safe and comfortable clothes

Choosing the right clothes can help lower your risk of falls. Here are some tips:

- Wear non-skid shoes, even around your home
- Avoid wearing slippers, flip-flops and high heels
- Avoid wearing socks with no shoes
- Wear clothes that do not drag on the ground, and are not too baggy. Baggy clothes can catch on items and cause you to fall
- Wear your glasses and hearing aids

## Staying safe outdoors

Going outside is good for your health and a great way to stay active. Here's what you can do to stay safe outdoors:

- Use bright outdoor lighting to see where you are walking
- Use paths where ice, leaves, rocks and snow are cleared regularly
- Be mindful of risks in your outdoor space like: plants; raised decks, porches or steps where it may be helpful to have a guardrail; broken walkways and driveway edges
- If possible, speak to your landlord (if applicable) or a landscaper who can help you maintain these.

## What if you fall?

If you fall and you are not injured:

1. Turn onto your side, bend the leg on top and lift yourself onto your elbows or hands
2. Crawl on your hands and knees towards a sturdy piece of furniture or a structure
3. Place both hands on the piece of furniture or a structure
4. Place your stronger leg in front, hold on to the furniture or structure, and stand up
5. Carefully turn around and sit down
6. Call your doctor or care provider

If you fall and feel dizzy or that you may be injured:

1. Do not try to get up
2. Do not drive yourself to the hospital
3. If you have an emergency call device or telephone close by, use it to get help
4. If you don't, call out for help if you think you can be heard, or slide/crawl to a telephone or place where you can be heard
5. Make noise with a cane or any object to attract attention
6. Find the most comfortable position and wait for help
7. Use anything near you for comfort and warmth

For more tools and tips on how to prevent falls, please visit:

<https://ethp.ca/>