

educational series

Cornerstone VNA Community Care

Stay Upright! Tips for Fall-Free Living

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Definition of a Fall

Falls are defined as:

“inadvertently coming to rest on the ground, floor or other lower level, excluding intentional change in position to rest on furniture, wall or other objects”





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Fall Facts

One in four Americans
aged 65+ falls each year.*

*National Council on Aging (ncoa.org)



Fall Facts

Every 11 seconds, an older adult is treated in the emergency room for a fall; every 19 minutes, an older adult dies from a fall.*

*National Council on Aging (ncoa.org)



Fall Facts

More than 95% of hip fractures are caused by falling,* usually by falling sideways

*National Council on Aging (ncoa.org)



Fall Facts

Each year at least 300,000 older people are hospitalized for hip fractures.*

*[cdc.gov/falls/prevention](https://www.cdc.gov/falls/prevention)





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What can happen after a fall?

Falls can cause broken bones, like wrist, arm, ankle, and hip fractures.





What can happen after a fall?

- Falls can cause further injury if taking blood thinners.
- An older person who falls and hits their head should see their doctor right away to make sure they don't have a brain injury.





What can happen after a fall?

- Many people who fall, even if they're not injured, become afraid of falling.
- This fear may cause a person to cut down on their everyday activities.
- When a person is less active, they become weaker, and this increases their chances of falling.





What Conditions Make You More Likely to Fall?

- Lower body weakness
- Difficulties with walking and balance
- Use of medicines, such as tranquilizers, sedatives, or antidepressants.
- Even some over-the-counter medicines can affect balance and how steady you are on your feet—anything that can cause drowsiness.



What Conditions Make You More Likely to Fall?

- Impaired Proprioception
 - Sensors in your joints
 - Tells your brain where your body parts are in space
 - They get less sensitive as we age
 - Exercise can improve their sensitivity
- Issues with your Vestibular System
 - Dizzy center in your inner ear
 - Crystals dislodge causing a spinning effect
 - Vestibular therapy can help realign the crystals and improve spinning



What Conditions Make You More Likely to Fall?

- Cognition
 - Our reaction times and how we process
 - Information slows as we age
 - Doing mind games such as word search, sudoku, etc. can improve this
- Vision
 - As we age our vision decreases, increasing the risk for falls
 - Low lighting and clutter combined with low vision can be hazardous



What Conditions Make You More Likely to Fall?

- Poor nutrition and dehydration
- Foot pain or poor footwear
- Medications-changes in weight or new medications
- Home hazards or dangers such as:
 - broken or uneven steps
 - throw rugs or clutter that can be tripped over





What You Can Do to Prevent Falls

- Talk to Your Doctor
- Ask your doctor or healthcare provider to evaluate your risk for falling and talk with them about specific things you can do.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist to review your medicines to see if any might make you dizzy or sleepy. This should include prescription medicines and over-the-counter medicines.





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What You Can Do to Prevent Falls

- Do Strength and Balance Exercises. Do exercises that make your legs stronger and improve your balance.
- Community classes are a good way to improve strength.





What You Can Do to Prevent Falls

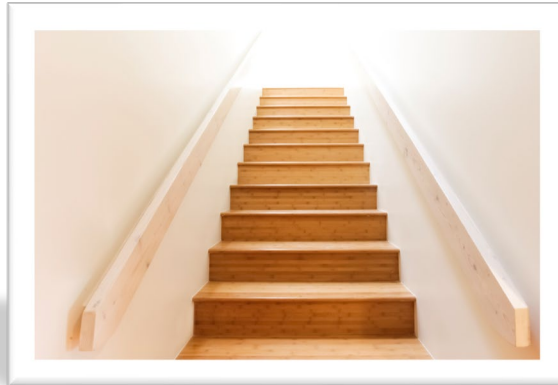
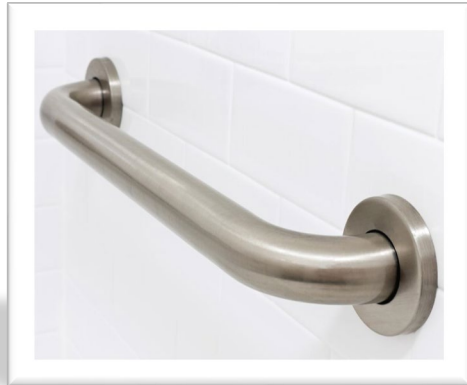
- Have your eyes checked by an eye doctor at least once a year and be sure to update your eyeglasses if needed.
- If you have bifocal or progressive lenses, you may want to get a pair of glasses with only your distance prescription for outdoor activities, such as walking. Sometimes these types of lenses can make things seem closer or farther away than they really are.





What You Can Do to Prevent Falls

- Make Your Home Safer
 - Get rid of things you could trip over.
 - Add grab bars inside and outside your tub or shower and next to the toilet.
 - Make sure your home has adequate lighting by adding more or brighter light bulbs.
 - Put railings on both sides of stairs.





Fall Risk Assessment

Check your risk for falling	Yes	No	Why it matters
1. Have you fallen in the past 6 months?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	People who have fallen once are more likely to fall again.
2. Do you have difficulty or dizziness getting up from a chair?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	This is a sign of poor balance
3. Do you have difficulty picking objects up from the floor?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	This is a sign of weak leg muscles.
4. Do you take 4 or more medications?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Side effects from medication can increase risk of falling.
5. Have you noticed a decrease in hearing or vision?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Increase your risk for falling.



Fall Risk Assessment (continued)

Check your risk for falling	Yes	No	Why it matters
6. Are you worried about falling?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	People who are worried about falling are more likely to fall.
7. Have you been advised to use a cane or a walker?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	This is a sign of poor balance or weak leg muscles.
8. Do you steady yourself by holding onto furniture?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	This is a sign of poor balance.
9. Do you often have to rush to the toilet?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rushing to the bathroom, especially at night, increases your chance of falling.
10. Do you have a chronic medical condition or neurological problem?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fatigue or numbness in your feet can cause increase risk for falls.
Total "Yes" answers _____			Add a point for each "yes" answer. If you scored 4 or more points, you may be at risk for falling.



Home Safety Falls Checklist

General

- ☐ Keep a cell phone or portable phone near you at all times
- ☐ Remove clutter from pathways
- ☐ Remove scatter rugs and secure down carpets and larger area rugs
- ☐ Have adequate lighting in your home

Stairs

- ☐ Remove objects and clutter from stairs
- ☐ Secure carpeting on stairs
- ☐ Secure and install railings

Kitchen

- ☐ Have everyday items used within reach
- ☐ Electrical cords off the floor
- ☐ Clean up spills on the floor



Home Safety Falls Checklist (continued)

Bathroom

- ☐ Is there appropriate toilet seat and grab bars around the toilet
- ☐ Do you have grab bars in your shower
- ☐ Are everyday used items within reach

Bedroom

- ☐ Clear pathway to bedside
- ☐ Nightlights to access bathroom
- ☐ Bedside table for a nightlight and phone

Do not be afraid to tell your doctor



**Speak
up!**

**Talk to your
doctor about
fall risks and
prevention.**





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Remember...

Falling is NOT a part of aging. You can prevent falls!



Questions?

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educational series

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A Matter of Balance Community Classes





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Thank you!

If you need healthcare at home, you have a choice. We are here for you! Visit our website at cornerstonevna.org for upcoming educational programs, support groups, and wellness clinics.

