

MEDfacts

An Educational Health Series From National Jewish Health®



Fall Prevention Tips

What are the main factors causing falls?

Anyone can fall, although falls that lead to injury are more common in the elderly. There are a number of factors that increase your risk of falling. Factors that increase your risk include:

- Environmental factors (slippery floors, loose rugs),
- Increasing age,
- Illness and chronic conditions (muscle weakness, unsteady balance, dizziness, having fallen in the last year) and
- Medicine side effects (medicines such as blood pressure, sedatives, antidepressants).

How can you prevent falls in the hospital?

Hospital Safety Tips:

- Talk with your health care provider about all the medicines you are taking. The more medicine you take, the more side effects you can have. This raises your risk of falling.
- Talk with your health care provider about any muscle weakness, dizziness, balance or vision problems.
- Use your call button to ask for help.
- When you get out of bed, sit on the side of the bed briefly before you stand up.
- Use your walker, cane or assistive device.
- Keep the floor free of clutter, such as cords or tubing.

How can you prevent falls at home?

Indoor Safety Tips

- Make sure all areas are well lit, especially near stairs. Light switches should be located at doorways.
- Keep floors free from clutter.
- Keep floor surfaces smooth, but not slippery. When in other areas, be aware of highly polished or wet floor surfaces that may be slippery and dangerous.
- When entering rooms, be aware of steps.

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- Wear supportive, low-heeled shoes, even at home. Avoid walking around in socks, stockings, or slippers. They can be slippery.
- Make sure that all carpets or area rugs have skid-proof backing or are tacked to the floor, especially on stairs.
- Be sure that all stairwells are well lit and have handrails, preferably on both sides.
- Use a rubber bath mat in the shower or tub.
- Install grab bars on bathroom walls beside tubs, showers, and toilets.
- Keep a flashlight with fresh batteries beside your bed.
- Reorganize work areas and storage to minimize the need for stooping or excessive reaching. If you must use a step stool, use a sturdy one with a handrail and wide steps.
- Arrange with a family member or friend for daily contact.
- If you need a walker, cane or assistive device for increased stability, always use it.
- If you live alone, you may wish to contract with a monitoring company
- that will respond to your call 24 hours/day.

Outdoor Safety Tips

- In bad weather, use a walker or cane for added stability.
- Wear shoes or boots with rubber soles for added traction.
- In winter, carry a small bag of course salt or kitty litter in your pocket or car. You can then sprinkle the salt or kitty litter on sidewalks or streets that are slippery.

Many falls can be prevented. Follow these safety tips and you can help prevent falls.

Note: This information is provided to you as an educational service of LUNG LINE®. It is not meant to be a substitute for consulting with your own physician.

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