

MEDfacts

An Educational Health Series From National Jewish Health®



Osteoporosis and Fall Prevention Tips

Osteoporosis weakens the bones, making them more fragile and easier to break (fracture). Falls are a leading cause of fracture in people with osteoporosis. These fractures can affect any bone in the body, but fractures occur most often occur in the hip, wrist and spine. Preventing falls is important for people with osteoporosis. The good news is that falls can often be prevented by following these indoor and outdoor safety tips.

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 outside of home be aware of highly polished or wet floor surfaces that may be slippery and dangerous.
- When entering rooms, be aware of steps.
- 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.

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- 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.

Factors Contributing to Falls

- Illnesses and medicines that affect your circulation, sensation, balance or mobility can contribute to falls. If you are having any of these symptoms, ask your health care provider if there is a relationship between the symptoms you are having and the medicines you are taking. Never change or skip medicines without first talking with your health care provider.
- Hearing and vision changes can also contribute to falls. Sounds help orient us to where we are and when we are in danger. Changes in depth perception or peripheral (side) vision can decrease how you judge the steepness of stairs or curbs or how you avoid objects in your path. Have regular eye exams and wear any prescription glasses or contacts.
- As you get older, your reaction time slows and regaining your balance following a sudden movement may be difficult. This can result in a fall. An active lifestyle maintains muscle tone and flexibility, improves body control and slows bone loss. Regular weight bearing and strengthening exercises can build and tone muscles in all age groups. Ask your health care provider what types of activities are best for you.

By following these safety tips you can have a life that is as safe, active and independent as possible.

Note: This information is provided to you as an educational service of LUNG LINE® (1-800-222-LUNG) at National Jewish Health. It is not meant to be a substitute for consulting with your own physician.

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