

Osteoporosis and Fall Prevention Tips

Falls are a leading cause of fracture in people with osteoporosis, because the disease weakens bones, making them less sturdy and more susceptible to breaking. Consequently, even a minor fall can cause harm, most commonly to the hip, wrist or spine, though all bones can be fractured. The elderly are also at risk for falls.

There are many factors that can lead to an increased chance of falling and, in the case of persons with osteoporosis, potentially serious damage. Illnesses and medicines that affect your circulation, sensation, balance or mobility can contribute to falls. If you have any of these symptoms, ask your health care provider if there is a relationship between your symptoms and the medicines you take. Never change or skip medicines without first talking with your health care provider.



Hearing and vision changes also can contribute to falls. Sounds help to orient you and alert you to danger. Changes in depth perception or peripheral (side) vision can decrease how you judge the steepness of stairs or curbs and affect how you avoid objects in your path. Have regular eye exams, and wear necessary prescription glasses or contact lenses.

As you get older, your reaction time also 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.

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 because they can be slippery.
- Make sure that all carpets or area rugs have skidproof 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.

By following these safety tips you can have a life that is as safe, active and independent as possible. Visit our website for more information about support groups, clinical trials and lifestyle information.

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