

Safety Tips to Prevent Falls at Home

Everyone is at risk for falling. Falls can happen at any age, at any time or anywhere. Your risk for falls may increase if you are ill, have cancer or receive cancer treatments, such as chemotherapy or radiation. Most falls happen at home, often in the bathroom. Some falls may only cause bumps and bruises, but they can also lead to other serious health problems, such as head injuries or bleeding. It is important to know what you can do to lower your risk of falls. Here are some tips to make your home as safe as possible.

Floors

- Keep cords, furniture and small objects out of walkways and off stairs. **Do not** put electric cords under rugs.
- Large area rugs should have non-slip backing. If not, use double-sided tape to keep the rug securely attached to the floor. **Do not** use throw rugs.
- Remove carpet that is torn or has turned-up edges. Use low-pile carpet or solid flooring.
- Use bright tape or paint to mark areas where the floor surface changes, such as from carpet to solid floors. It is easy to fall when you walk from one type of flooring to another.

Lighting

- Keeps areas of your home well-lit. Use night-lights in bedrooms, bathrooms and near stairways.
- Use light switches that glow in the dark, so they can be seen more easily.
- Keep electrical cords and small items out of your path.

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

Stairs

- Place handrails on both sides of your stairs. These handrails should extend past the top and bottom stair.
- Try not to carry anything, or carry as little as possible when you use the stairs.
- Use good lighting on your stairs. Non-slip surfaces can be put on wood stairs to prevent sliding.
- Use bright tape or paint on the edge of each step, so they are more easily seen.

Furniture

- Be careful when you sit down. Make sure the backs of your legs touch the seat of the chair behind you before you sit down.
- Use chairs and furniture that are stable for your size and weight. Choose chairs with armrests.
- Get help to move furniture that may block your walking path.

Bathroom

- Use non-skid decals or a mat in your tub or shower.
- Install sturdy grab bars around your toilet and in your shower or bathtub. Towel bars will break if you use them as grab bars.
- Use a shower chair and an elevated toilet seat.
- Leave the bathroom door unlocked so it can be opened if you fall.

Kitchen

- Place items you use most often at counter level or within easy reach.
- Use a sturdy step stool with a handrail to reach items on high shelves. **Do not** climb on the counter or use chairs.
- Wear non-slip shoes to lower your risk of falls.

Bedroom

- **Do not** wear long nightgowns or robes. These can cause you to trip.
- **Do not** wear loose shoes that cause you to shuffle your feet when you walk. Wear non-slip shoes or slippers that fit well and stay securely on your feet.
- Sleep in a bed that is easy to get into and out of.
- Place a lamp, telephone and flashlight near your bed in case you need them during the night.

Outside Your Home

- Leave outside lights on at night if you are out after dark.
- Get help to repair cracks in your pavement and fill holes in your lawn.
- Get help to remove rocks, tools, snow, wet leaves and ice on your outside walkways and stairs.

Other Tips

- Be careful not to trip over pets. Be aware of where your pet is when you move around.
- Take your time. **Do not** rush to answer the phone or door.
- Always keep a telephone within reach. It may help to keep a mobile phone in your pocket or use an emergency alert necklace in case you fall and are unable to reach your phone.
- If needed, use a cane or walker to give you support when you are walking.
- Ask for help when you get up if you feel shaky, weak, dizzy or lightheaded.
- Change positions slowly. This can help lower your chance of getting dizzy.