

# 50 Ways To Guard Against Falling



Allina Health



## How to Guard Against Falling

1. Strong hip and leg muscles are important in preventing falls. Staying active keeps them strong. One activity that helps strengthen leg muscles is to stand up and sit down during TV commercials.
2. The muscles that lift your foot off the gas pedal are the same muscles that help your toes clear the floor when you step forward. Tapping your foot to the beat of music helps to keep those muscles strong. Also, be sure to alternate and tap your other foot, too.
3. If you use a mobility device such as a cane, walker or wheelchair, be sure it is easily accessible.
4. Any furniture that you may lean on for support should be non-moveable.
5. Are your carpets getting thread-bare? Be sure to guard against catching a toe in a loose thread. Worn areas in the carpet can also be hazardous. Ask a family member or friend to check the carpet for you if your vision is poor.
6. Having the telephone outlet near your bed or chair can prevent getting your foot or cane caught in the cord if you're in a hurry to answer a call.
7. Many people fall because they slide on newspapers on the floor. If you have been reading a magazine or a newspaper, and need to get up from the chair in which you've been sitting, fold the papers and stuff them between the cushions and the armrest.
8. If you use a mobility device such as a cane or walker, be sure that it is the correct height. You will be much safer and the device will be easier to use.
9. When going from room to room, some people use touch to get a "fix" on their environment. Touch the wall or a piece of non-moveable furniture.

10. Remove all throw rugs. Be sure that your bathroom rug has a rubber backing on it to prevent it from slipping under your feet.
11. If your mobility is a little shaky, and you live alone, carrying a cordless phone with you is a good idea. A tummy-pouch works well for this. If you use a walker, tie a round potato chip box on the walker so you can easily carry the phone with you.
12. Raising your furniture at a level that is reasonable for your height may help you in sitting down and getting up more easily. Putting thick wooden blocks under the legs may help.
13. Use a night light. Many people fall while reaching for a light switch in the dark and over-extending their reach because they misjudged the distance.
14. Be sure your bedding is out of the way when the bed is turned down so you will not trip on the bed clothes.
15. Using a raised toilet seat may make coming to a standing position easier.
16. Use non-slip treads in the tub or shower.
17. Be sure hallways and areas around the bed and chairs are uncluttered.
18. For safety when taking a shower, sit on a bath bench and use a detachable shower head.
19. Install and use tub grab bars for safety when getting out of the tub. (A detachable type of grab bar that fits over the side of the tub and is attached securely is perfectly safe.) There are specially designed grab bars for older tubs which have rolled edges.
20. Be sure that lighting is adequate in all areas of your home, including the hallways and the bathroom.

21. Eliminate surfaces which glare in the light, such as a high-gloss linoleum floor in front of a picture window. Hanging a sheet curtain to diffuse the light is safer and easier on the eyes.
22. Many falls are related to medicine. Medicines, whether over-the-counter or prescribed, should be gathered together and brought to your next doctor visit. Some medicines work against each other and cause dizziness or confusion. Let your doctor know about everything that you're taking.
23. To prevent medicine errors, be sure that you have the visual ability to read the label before you leave the pharmacy. If you have difficulty organizing and maintaining an accurate medicine schedule, use a medicine organizer, and get help either from your doctor or home health nurse.
24. If you tend to be forgetful, ask a family member or neighbor to help you remember important things such as taking medicine and eating meals. This will also help to prevent falls which occur when blood glucose drops too low. Prescribed medicine may have been based on your weight at the time of the prescription. If your weight changes, the dosage may now be incorrect for you.
25. Poor nutrition is the cause of many problems, including weakness or confusion. Both of these can increase your risk of falls.
26. Do you have to climb to reach objects on the upper shelves of the cupboards? If you store lightweight items on the top and heavier items on the bottom, you can use an extended reacher to retrieve over-head items without climbing on a step stool.

27. Do you get dizzy if you have to bend over to reach low items? If possible, use a chair and sit down before bending over. Make sure you recover from any dizziness before standing again.
28. Be sure that your clothes fit you well. People have been known to fall because of ill-fitting footwear or baggy trousers.
29. It is safer to wear shoes with a back instead of slippers. Slippers don't offer enough support. Women who are used to wearing high heels may be safer in shoes with a little wide heel.
30. Do you need to go up and down stairs in your home? If so, you should have a hand rail on both sides of the stairway, especially if one side of your body is weaker than the other.
31. Be sure that your hand rails are attached securely to the wall.
32. When someone falls on the stairs, it is most often because they missed the last step. Two tips which may be helpful are:
  - Put the bathtub-type non-slip tread on the hand rail to give yourself a tactile warning that you're at the last step.
  - Put a strip of white tape across the edge of the last step as a visual clue.
33. If you are weak and frail, and absolutely must go up or down stairs, you may be safer if you side step up or down the stairs, keeping both hands on the rail.

34. Confidence plays a big role in falls. If people are afraid they will fall, they protect themselves by becoming increasingly sedentary and restrictive in their activities. This, in turn, leads to deconditioning and weakness, and that can cause falls. Rather than restrict your activities, go with a group for safety and help.
35. If you live alone, your family may feel more comfortable if you wear an emergency alert system around your neck. This would ensure that you would be found even if you did fall and could not get to a phone.
36. Join a walking group. This has been shown to improve balance and reduce falls.
37. A slow walking speed has long been linked with risk of falls. A slow walking speed leads to shuffling. When you shuffle, there is a greater risk of your toe catching on something causing you to trip. Walk at the quickest speed that is comfortable for you.
38. If you use a wheelchair, be sure that the wheels are locked before transferring.
39. Some head positions can cause dizziness by kinking certain arteries. Call your doctor if you become dizzy when you extend your neck, or when you turn your head to either side.
40. When coming to a standing position, stand more slowly to avoid the feeling of blacking out.
41. If you have incontinence during the night, put a commode near the bed so that you don't have to try to get the toilet in a hurry when you are sleepy.
42. If you are afraid to take a bath for fear of falling, ask your doctor for help in getting professional advice on how to safely do this activity.

43. Normal changes occur with age which can lead to falls. Take charge of what you can do to make yourself safer so that you don't become confined to your living area, and become weaker.
44. Don't over-reach, especially when standing up.
45. Ask for help if you need it rather than risk falling by trying to do something that may be unsafe for you.
46. Reporting a fall to a health care provider will not result in restricting your independence, but rather, will help you to get the services you need to prevent falling again.
47. Of all falls, 85 percent occur in the home. Home health nurses and therapists will work with you to make your home safe. A doctor's order is necessary for this. Many times this care is covered by Medicare or private insurance.
48. Many people fall when looking over their shoulders. If you are unsteady, use a non-moveable object for support before looking over your shoulder.
49. Making a 360-degree turn is another area where many falls occur. Turn slowly to be safe. If using furniture for support, be sure that it is heavy and non-moveable.
50. Your loving pet may be the cause of a fall. Don't allow your dog to jump on you. Consider using automatic feeders and water dispensers. Sit on a chair beside the kitty litter box when cleaning it, rather than bending over since that may cause dizziness.





# Notes



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