

# Preventing Falls - Topic Overview

Every year, thousands of older adults fall and hurt themselves. Falls are one of the main causes of injury and disability in people age 65 and older. People who have had a [stroke](#) or have [multiple sclerosis](#) or [osteoporosis](#) are also at risk. These tips can help you avoid falls.

## Take care of yourself

If you live alone, think about wearing an alarm device that will bring help in case you fall and can't get up. Or carry a cordless or cell phone with you from room to room. Then you can quickly call for help if you need it.

Have your [vision](#) and hearing checked each year or anytime you notice a change. If you have trouble seeing and hearing, you might not be able to avoid objects that make you lose your balance.

If you are very weak or dizzy, have someone help you get out of bed, walk, and bathe.

Call your doctor if you have calluses or corns on your feet that need to be removed. If you wear loose-fitting shoes because of calluses or corns, you can lose your balance and fall.

Call your doctor if you are dizzy and lose your balance. You may have a health problem that needs treatment, such as an inner [ear](#) problem.

## Learn ways to keep your balance

Exercise often to improve your strength, muscle tone, and sense of balance. Walking is a great way to start. [Swimming](#) can be a good choice if you can't walk well. For simple exercises you can try at home, see [Quick Tips: Improving Your Balance](#).

Wear low-heeled shoes that fit well and give your feet good support. Use footwear with nonskid soles. Repair or replace worn heels and soles.

If you use a walker or cane, make sure it is fitted to you. Put rubber tips on it.

If you have pets, keep them in one place at night. Train your pets not to jump or get underfoot. Think about buying a collar with a bell for your pet so you will know when your pet is nearby.

## Learn about your medicines

Know the side effects of medicines you are taking. Ask your doctor if the medicines you take can affect your balance. For instance, sleeping pills and some medicines for [anxiety](#) can affect your balance.

If you take two or more medicines, talk to your doctor about how they work together. Sometimes combinations of medicines can cause [dizziness](#) or sleepiness. Either of these can lead to a fall.

## Make your home safer

Remove or fix things you could trip over, such as raised doorway thresholds, throw rugs, or loose carpet.

Keep paths clear of electrical cords and clutter.


Use nonskid floor wax, and wipe up spills right away.

Keep your house well lit. Use night-lights (or keep the overhead light on at night) in hallways and bathrooms.

Put sturdy handrails on stairways. Make sure you have a light at the top and bottom of the stairs.

Store things on lower shelves so you don't have to climb or reach high.

Keep a phone and a flashlight by your bed. Check the flashlight batteries often to make sure they still work.

For a complete list of hazards to look for and fix at home, see this [checklist for preventing falls](#)  (What is a [PDF](#) document?).

## Stay safe while bathing

Install grab handles and nonskid mats in the tub and shower.

Use a shower chair or bath bench. You can also try using a hand-held shower head.

Get into a tub or shower by putting the weaker leg in first. Get out of a tub or shower with your strong side first.

**Prevent outdoor falls**

If you live in an area that gets snow and ice in the winter, have a family member or friend sprinkle salt or sand on slippery steps and sidewalks.

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