

PREVENTING FALLS

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A fall causing serious injury can occur to anyone at any time. Since most trips, slips and falls happen in and around the home, it is a good idea to fall-proof your home with the following measures:

In the Halls and on the Stairs

- Install non-slip strips on the edge of each step.
- Secure loose carpet. Make sure hallways and stairs are cleared of anything that you can trip over (i.e. books, shoes, bags).
- Replace burnt-out light bulbs so that you always see where you are going. Night-lights in halls and stairways can also be helpful.
- Install handrails on *both* sides of staircases inside and outside the home.



In the Bathroom

- Use non-slip mats *inside* and *outside* the bathtub and shower.
- Install grab bars next to your toilet and in the tub or shower.

In the Kitchen

- Put commonly used items on lower shelves and cabinets so a step-stool is not needed.
- Replace loose scatter mats with rugs that have a rubber backing.

Outdoors

- Keep a shovel and covered bucket of sand or salt near the doorway in winter to safely handle slippery conditions.
- Keep steps and pathways clear of clutter such as yard tools, snow shovels, newspapers and wet leaves.
- Don't juggle parcels while trying to enter the house. Never carry more than is reasonable. Instead, make a few trips from the car with smaller packages.



More tips

- Quickly dry up any wet areas on the floor to prevent slipping.
- Wear shoes with good support and non-slip soles.
- Always sit down to put on or take off shoes and clothes.
- Employ extra caution when using ladders and step-stools.
- **Regular exercise** can help improve your strength, balance and coordination. Making your body stronger is one of the best ways to prevent falls. Exercises such as yoga, Tai Chi, resistance training, bicycle riding, and power walking are great examples.

The following may be especially important for older individuals:

- Maintaining a **healthy diet** and not skipping meals can increase your energy and strength. Missing meals can lead to weakness, irritability and dizziness.
- Have your MD or pharmacist **review your medications**. Some medications can cause dizziness and weakness, which can affect your balance and perception. Make sure that your MD or pharmacist explains all of the possible side effects of your medications.



Although the risk of falling increases as you get older, there are some simple things people of all ages can do to prevent falls. In the event that you fall and suffer a muscle or joint injury that does not subside, you should contact a licensed health professional. For more information, visit www.nhwc.ca. The author credits the Canadian Chiropractic Association (CCA) in the preparation of this educational information for use by its members and the public.

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