

# Helpful Tips for Preventing Falls

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How many of us have an elderly family member or friend who has experienced a fall that has resulted in either a minor injury or a more serious injury such as a broken bone? Unfortunately, many of our community dwelling elderly have experienced a loss of balance or a fall resulting in an injury. Each year, nearly 1/3 of all people over age 65 living in our community experience a significant fall.

Here are some tips to help prevent or reduce the risk for falling in community dwelling elderly:

- Make sure your home is safe:
  - Wear shoes that have a non-skid sole.
  - Don't wax your floor, or if you do, use a non-skid wax.
  - Make sure you have adequate lighting to improve the ability to see things that could be tripped over.
  - Use night lights in the bedroom, bathroom, hallways, and stairways.
  - Do not pull electrical cords across pathways.
  - Remove throws and rugs or fasten them to the floor with carpet tape.
  - Have grab bars put in the bathtub, shower and toilet area.
- Next, get regular check-ups from your doctor, take care of changes in health:
  - Have your eyes checked for changes in vision.
  - See your physician if you feel dizzy, weak, unsteady on your feet, confused, or if you fall.
  - Inform your doctor if a medication you are taking is making you feel dizzy or making you lose your balance.
- When getting up from bed, sit at the edge for a minute or two before standing to let your body adjust.
- Finally, keep your body in shape:
  - Get regular exercise, especially walking.
  - Perform exercises to strengthen muscles.

If you or a family member has experienced an episode of falling or unsteadiness, your physician may recommend physical therapy. A physical therapist can help reduce the risk of falling in the following ways: They can help in training to properly use a cane or walker, assisting in leg strengthening exercises, and developing programs to help improve balance and safety during walking and activities of daily living. It is important to see your physician if you experience falling or unsteadiness during walking so medical conditions can be properly diagnosed.