

Six Tips to Help Reduce Falls

As many of you already know, your risk of falling each year after age 65 is about one in three. Falls are the leading cause of injury and injury-related death among older adults. However many falls and fall-related injuries are preventable. Here are 6 tips (modified from the MayoClinic.com – “Tools for healthier lives”) to help you to reduce your risk of falling and injury.

1. Make an appointment with your doctor

- You and your doctor can take a comprehensive look at your health, your medications, and your level of activity to identify situations that put you at risk for falling.
- Bring a complete list of all medications you are taking, or simply bring the bottles of medicine with you to discuss with your doctor. Many medicines have side effects such as dizziness that may contribute to a loss of balance.
- If you have fallen before, write down the details and share this information with your doctor.
- Keep your doctor informed if you experience any dizziness, joint pain, numbness, shortness of breath, changes in bowel or bladder patterns.

2. Keep moving

- It is important to get regular physical activity. Walking as much as you are able is one of the best forms or regular exercise. Contact the Therapy Department for other ways to stay active.

3. Wear sensible shoes

- Buy properly fitting, sturdy shoes with non-skid soles (no slip-ons).
- Avoid shoes with extra thick soles that may catch on carpeting and contribute to a fall.
- If you wear lace-up shoes remember to keep them tied.
- If you have trouble tying your shoes select footwear with Velcro fasteners.

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4. Remove home hazards (a few examples are)

- Be sure there are clear paths especially to and from your bed to the bathroom.
- Move furniture, plant stands etc from high traffic areas.
- Use nonskid mats in your bathtub or shower.

5. Light up your living space

- Keep your home brightly lit (with energy saving bulbs) to avoid tripping on objects that are hard to see.
- Place a lamp or nightlight near your bed to assist you when you get up at night.
- Keep flashlights in easy to find places in case of a power outage.

6. Use assistive devices

- Your doctor or physical therapist may recommend the use of a walker or cane to improve your balance.
- Additional grab bars in your bathroom may provide additional security.
- A raised toilet seat or shower bench can increase safety while bathing.

Ask your doctor for a referral for physical or occupational therapy to assist you with fall prevention strategies. Our Rehab team is available to help you to decrease your risk of falling.