

# Falls Prevention Safety Plan

Your new falls prevention safety plan should begin with a visit to your physician.

Before you go to your appointment, write down some of the important information that your physician will need to know to be able to properly assess your risk for falls.

- Make a list of your prescription and over-the-counter medications and supplements, then bring that list to your appointment. Your doctor can review your list and look for side effects or interactions that may increase your risk of falling.
- Write down the details that you remember about any previous falls you have had; where did it happen, when did it happen, how did you fall and did you sustain any injuries at all.
- Various health conditions can make it difficult to stay on your feet because of issues like poor eyesight, dizziness, shortness of breath, pain, weakness and fatigue. These are all areas that your doctor can evaluate.

Next in your plan should be activity and exercise.

After getting your doctor's OK to participate, try a new activity such as walking, warm water aerobics or Tai Chi. Any one of these activities can help reduce the risk of falls by improving strength, balance, coordination and flexibility. Your doctor might even recommend an exercise program tailored specifically for you.

Safety at home is #1

The majority of falls happen at home, so it is important to take the time to make sure that your home environment is as safe as it can be.

- Make sure furniture and clutter are cleared from high traffic areas.
- Secure or remove loose rugs.
- Repair loose, wooden floorboards and carpeting right away.
- Check for cords that will create a tripping hazard.
- Store clothing, dishes, food and other necessities within easy reach.
- Immediately clean spilled liquids, grease or food.
- Use non-slip mats in your bathtub or shower.

- Place night lights in your bedroom, hallways and bathroom.
- Make sure that you have easy access to a light source at night, like next to your bed.
- Consider installing glow-in-the-dark or illuminated light switches.
- Always turn on lights before using the stairs.
- Always keep a flash light handy.

## Be sure-footed with better shoes.

High heels, slippers and shoes with slick soles can cause you to slip, stumble and fall. Try these tips instead.

- Measure your feet when you buy shoes, foot sizes change.
- Buy proper fitting, sturdy shoes with non-skid soles.
- Avoid shoes with extra thick soles.
- Choose lace-up or Velcro closure shoes instead of slip-ons.

## Give yourself something to hold on to.

Assistive devices, installed and use properly, can keep you strong and steady.

- Use a cane, walker or other assistive device in your home, as well as outside.
- Use or install handrails on both sides of a stairway.
- Make sure that you have non-slip treads on bare wooden steps.
- Install grab bars in your shower or tub.
- Use a raised toilet seat if it makes getting to a standing position easier.
- Use a sturdy shower seat and a hand held shower nozzle to make bathing safer.

## Move mindfully.

Being mindful of your actions on a daily basis can also help to reduce your risk for falls.

- Be sure to pick up your feet when you walk and walk heel to toe.
- Try not to rush, take you time and focus on the task at hand.
- Eat well and drink plenty of water or other non-caffeinated beverages.
- Never carry items that prevent you from seeing where you are putting your feet.