

DHEC Home Care Teaching: Fall Prevention



Preventing a fall: Tips when getting up and moving

Each year thousands of people fall at home and are seriously injured. Falls are usually caused by hazards that can be fixed. The older you are the more chance you have of falling. Two out of three people who have a fall will fall again in the next six months. Bone loss, not exercising regularly, poor eyesight, some medications and safety hazards around your home can put you at risk. Follow these suggestions to help keep you safe.

<p>Activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise makes you stronger and can improve your balance and coordination. • Rise slowly after eating or sleeping. Low blood pressure can cause dizziness at these times. 	
<p>Check your medications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review your medications with your nurse and doctor. Some medications can make you drowsy or dizzy and can increase your chance of falling. 	
<p>Check your eyesight</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check your vision at least once a year. Poor vision can increase your risk of falling. 	
<p>Check your shoes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear rubber soles or shoes that won't be slippery when you walk. • Thin-soled shoes are better than those with thick soles. • Don't go barefoot or walk just in your socks. 	
<p>Check your home</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fix what you can to make your home safer and reduce your chance of falling. Each room might contain safety hazards. 	
<p>Keep your pathways clear</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove furniture, rugs and objects blocking your path. • Tape loose wires and cords to the floor. 	

<p>Keep steps and stairs open</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove objects or items on the stairs. • Repair loose stairs or handrails. • Light things up. Have enough light at the top and bottom of the stairs. 	
<p>Kitchen and bath</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep what you use often within easy reach. • Use a stepstool with a handrail to hold on to. NEVER stand on a chair. • Use a non-slip mat or non-slip strips in your bathtub or shower. • Install a grab bar to help you get in and out of the tub. 	
<p>Bedrooms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a night-light so you can see where you are walking. • Place a lamp close to your bed where you can reach it. • Get up slowly from your bed. 	
<p>When getting out of bed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lie on your back with both knees bent and feet flat. • Roll onto your side towards the direction you will get out of bed. • Bring your legs forward over the edge of the bed and lower them as you push your body up with your arms. 	
<p>When standing up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scoot to the edge of your bed or chair. • Put the stronger leg slightly in back of the weaker leg. • Place your hands on armrests or on the edge of the bed. • Lean your body forward and push down on your arms to stand up. • Rock a few times to get some momentum before trying to stand up if you are sitting in a deep chair or bed that you sink into. 	
<p>When using a cane:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold the cane in the hand on your strong side. • Adjust the height. With the cane tip on the floor four inches in front of you and four inches to your side, the cane handle should come up to your hip joint. The cane may need to be shorter for your elbow to bend about 20 degrees. 	

<p>When using a walker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjust the height of your walker just like with the cane instructions above. • Keep your walker firmly on the ground with all four legs touching the floor. • Keep your walker a comfortable distance in front of you with your elbows slightly bent. Stand tall and don't walk bent over. 	
<p>When going up and down stairs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Going up:</u> Go up with the stronger leg first, and then bring the weaker leg onto the same step. If you use a cane, it should go last. • <u>Going down:</u> Go down with your weaker leg first, and then lower the stronger leg onto the same step. If you use a cane, it should go down first. • Use the handrail when there is one. • Use these tips when getting on or off a bus too. 	
<p>When going up and down hills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Going up:</u> Lead with the stronger leg. • <u>Going down:</u> Lead with the weaker leg. • Try going sideways up a steep hill. • Walk down the hill in a diagonal direction, rather than straight down. 	
<p>Other safety suggestions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep emergency phone numbers in large print. • Get an emergency alarm device you can wear or carry a cordless phone with you at all times. • Keep a phone near the floor in case you fall. • Keep night time thermostat settings above 65 degrees. A low body temperature could lead to dizziness and other health issues. 	

Sources: CDC Foundation, Metlife Foundation: What you can do to prevent falls. CDC: Falls among older adults: an overview. Jan, 2009; CDC Foundation, Metlife Foundation: Check for safety: A home fall prevention checklist for older adults, 2005.