

Fall Prevention



Medical, personal, and environmental factors that can increase your fall risk:

Medical Risk Factors:

- Impaired balance.
- Muscle weakness, particularly in the hips and legs.
- Decreased range of motion, particularly in the hips and legs/ankles.
- Arthritis.
- Urinary and bladder dysfunction (this can make you rush to the bathroom due to urgency, and/or any leakage of urine can cause you to slip).
- Vision or hearing loss.
- Side effects of certain medications.
- Certain health conditions can increase your fall risk including vertigo, peripheral neuropathy which can cause weakness, numbness, and pain in the feet, and orthostatic hypotension-also called postural hypotension. This is a form of low blood pressure that happens when standing after sitting or lying down. It can cause dizziness or lightheadedness and possibly fainting.

Personal Risk Factors:

- Inadequate footwear.
- Not drinking enough water (dehydration can cause dizziness/lightheadedness).
- Excessive use of alcohol.
- Not using the appropriate mobility device (recommended to you by a healthcare professional) or using your mobility device incorrectly. Devices should be adjusted to the appropriate height and should be in good working order.

Environmental Risk Factors

- Slippery or wet surfaces.
- Poor lighting.
- Cluttered pathways in the home.
- Pets can create tripping hazards (including their toys).
- Throw rugs and area rugs that are not properly secured.

Lifestyle choices you can make to help reduce your risk of falling:

- Maintain a healthy lifestyle and stay physically active.
- Complete exercises to strengthen your muscles (lower body in particular), improve your balance and range of motion (ankles are important). Get your hearing and vision checked regularly.
- Get an annual physical that includes an evaluation for cardiac and blood pressure problems.
- Check with your doctor about side effects of any medications you are taking.
- Stand up slowly and pause for several seconds before walking.
- Maintain proper hydration.
- Have a foot exam if you are experiencing pain.
- Use a walker or rollator if it is recommended and make sure it is the correct height, in good working condition and that you are using it safely.
- Wear appropriate footwear that fits properly and has rubber/non-skid soles.
- In the home, never walk in bare socks and replace slippers that are too loose, have no backs or poor treads.
- Consider staying inside when the weather is bad.
- Get enough sleep.
- Have your bone density checked as recommended by your physician to recognize signs of osteoporosis.

- **Address safety hazards in the home including:**
 1. Remove throw rugs and secure area rugs.
 2. Keep pathways and doorways free of clutter.
 3. Replace chairs or sofas that are too low and difficult to get out of.
 4. Place a lamp, telephone, and flashlight next to your bed.
 5. Install a nightlight along the route from bed to bathroom.
 6. Replace satiny sheets and comforters with less slippery fabrics.
 7. Keep clutter off bedroom floor.
 8. Keep frequently used items in the kitchen, bathroom, and bedroom within easy reach.
 9. Place a slip-resistant rug or rubber mat next to shower/tub.
 10. Use a rubber mat or non-skid strips on shower/tub floor.
 11. Use an elevated toilet seat, toilet rails, grab bars as needed.

Be sure to speak to your primary care provider about any falls you have. If you have any questions or concerns about safety hazards in your home, using your walker/rollator safely or equipment you may need for your bathroom, please contact Erin Curtin, Wellness Coordinator and Occupational Therapist. I am always happy to help!

