

## TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

Exercise regularly. Exercise improves your balance and coordination. Consider joining classes for balance. Consult with your physician and ask for information.

Have your doctor or pharmacist evaluate all of your current medications including those that are prescribed and those that are over the counter medications. Some medication combinations will create dizziness and set you up for falls.

Have your vision checked at least once a year by an eye doctor.

Get up slowly from a sitting position. Use assistance devices.

Wear shoes with non-skid soles that fit, inside and outside of the home.

Check car for safety issues: wiper blades, brakes, and ensure your vision is unobstructed.

Always use your seatbelt.

Do not drink and drive.

Do not mix alcohol with medications.

Do not use ladders without consulting with your doctor and family.

Complete an Advance Healthcare Directive document with your doctor and discuss it with your family.

**Fall Prevention**



**Knowing about the impact and causes of falls will assist you and your family in preventing falls from occurring.**



**May is National Trauma Awareness Month**

**Falls: Preventable at any Age!**

## Pediatric Specific Risks

Falls occur at all ages. Each age population has identified risks that lead to falls.

The pediatric population is typically divided into the following groups with the identified age specific risks which often lead to falls.

- **Infants:** Infants begin to rollover at about 3 months of age. Keep your hand on the child to prevent them from rolling off the changing table. The American Academy of Pediatrics discourages the use of rolling walkers.
- **Toddlers:** Children have a difficult time negotiating stairs until around 3 years of age. Use gates to prevent access to staircases. Toddlers are at risk for falling off of furniture, furniture falling on them and falling from windows. Furniture and windows should be secured.
- **Pre-Schoolers through Primary School:** Many children do not have a coordinated run until 9 years of age. When on wheeled vehicles children must wear a helmet. When on playground equipment remove the helmet. Playgrounds should have rubber or sand surfaces.
- **Adolescents:** Adolescents are risk takers! Ensure proper protective equipment is worn for all activities and sports.

## Home Evaluation

### Evaluate the kitchen.

Are there items you use often on high or low shelves?

If yes, move items into an easily reachable area, preferably waist high.

### Evaluate the bathroom.

Is the tub or shower area slippery? Do you need some support when you get in and out of the shower / tub or up from the toilet?

Put a non-slip rubber mat or self-stick strip on the floor of the shower or tub. Have a carpenter place grab bars inside the tub and next to the toilet.

### Evaluate the bedroom.

Is the light near the bed hard to reach? Is the path from your bed to the bathroom dark or have objects in the pathway?

Place a lamp close to the bed in easy reach. Ensure it is easy to reach and turn on. Keep eye-glasses on night stand, easily reachable. Use night lights so the path is well lit. Remove all objects in path.

Keep emergency numbers in large print near each phone.

**Ambulance - 911**

**Fire Dept. - 911**

**Physician:**

Keep emergency contact numbers for next of kin immediately available.

Name:

Phone:

Cell Phone:

## Walk through your home and ask yourself these questions:

### Do you have throw rugs on the floor?

*If yes, remove the rugs or use double-sided tape or non-slip backing so the rugs won't slip.*

### Do you have papers, books, objects on the floor?

*Keep floors tidy. Have someone pick up all objects and develop a system to keep them off the floor.*

### Do you have steps from your porch or stairway into the house?

*Make sure lighting is sufficient, use nightlights, check for steps that are uneven, chipped or in need of repair. If stairs are carpeted, check carpet for tears. Have an electrician put in a light switch at the bottom of the stairs. Use switches that put off a glow to make them easy to find. Fix loose handrails.*

**Notes:**

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## Adult Specific Risks

The adult population is divided into the adult and geriatric or aging population.

- **Adults:** Includes those individuals from their early twenties to sixty-five years of age.
- **Geriatric:** Defined as those individuals sixty-five years of age and older.

The adult population's risks of falling are typically related to recreational activity, home or the work environment. Examples of recreational activities include climbing or hiking. Falls around the home would include individuals working on ladders, on their roof or tripping on items inside their home. Factors that contribute to falls are faulty safety equipment, inappropriate use of equipment and the consumption of alcohol. Review of the national data reflects that falls are responsible for approximately 36% of falls cared for in a trauma center.

**Falls are Preventable!**

## Falls in Older Adults

Age-related changes contribute to falls in the older population. Medical problems add to the risk of falling. Injuries sustained from falls lead to complications and death in the older population. Falls are among the most common reasons for a decline in the older individual's ability to manage their own daily activities. This may lead to a need for daily assistance, admission to a skilled facility, or movement to an assisted living environment.

### Common Medical Conditions That Lead To Falls:

- Unstable balance
- Use of more than four prescriptions medications
- Hip weakness
- Decreased muscle strength
- Visual impairment / Hearing impairment
- Depression
- Dizziness or faintness upon standing
- Urinary incontinence
- Arthritis
- Diabetes
- Presence of pain
- Dementia
- Alzheimer's disease
- Anemia
- Parkinson's Disease
- Stroke / Previous stroke

## Preventing Falls

Tell your doctor about all falls and the events leading up to the fall. Be proactive, take precautions to prevent falls.

### Home:

- Remove things that may cause you to trip.
- Repair loose carpet.
- Move furniture and electrical cords out of walk pathways.
- Use nonskid floor wax, wipe up spills immediately.
- Place rubber tips on walkers, canes and clean tips often.
- Keep house well lit, use night lights, especially on stairs.
- Turn on lights if you must get up at night.
- Have handrails installed to assist you in the bathroom.

### Daily Activity:

- Store household items so that you do not have to reach, climb or stoop over.
- Use reaching devices.
- If you have to use a step stool, use one with rails.
- Do not carry heavy items or items that cause you to become off balance.
- Wear low-heeled shoes with nonskid soles that fit.
- Do not wear socks without shoes on smooth floors.