

Fall Prevention for Seniors

We should be paying attention to situations where falling is possible all year round, not just when snow and ice are present. One in four Americans aged 65+ falls each year. Every 11 seconds, an older adult is treated in the emergency room for a fall; every 19 minutes, an older adult dies from a fall.

Falls are the leading cause of fatal and nonfatal injuries for older Americans. They threaten seniors' safety, independence and generate enormous economic and personal costs. Falls also carry a heavy quality of life impact. A growing number of older adults fear falling and, as a result, limit their activities and social engagements. This can result in further physical decline, depression, social isolation, and feelings of helplessness.

Through practical lifestyle adjustments the number of falls among seniors can be significantly reduced. This guide is available to give some helpful tips to combat falls. It is in no way exhaustive, but meant as a starting point. There are a number of agencies that will come in and do a home evaluation, if you are interested. Your parish nurse is also available to consult and provide resources as needed by calling 608-231-4614.

An assessment of your home and your home routines:

KITCHEN

- Lower your kitchen shelves and move your most frequently used objects so you do not need to climb onto a stool to reach them.
- Keep your floors clean, clear and dry.
- Use a "reacher" device for those things that are too high.

OUTSIDE

- Install sturdy handrails.
- Make sure ice and snow are removed from pathways.
- Install good lighting.
- Decrease clutter.
- Consider hiring outside work to be done.

BATHROOM

- Install grab bars.
- Make sure rugs and mats are "non-slip" or have no rugs at all.
- Raise the toilet seat as needed.

BEDROOM

- Have a bedside lamp.
- Leave a night light on in the room and in your path to the bathroom.
- Keep the floors clear.

LIGHTING

- Make sure light switches are conveniently placed.
- Turn on the lights.

STEPS

- Keep the steps free of clutter
- Repair any broken steps or loose carpet
- Use the handrail.

FLOORS & FURNITURE

- Keep the floor clear to provide a good pathway.
- Remove objects and clutter.
- Do not use throw rugs
- Make sure cords and wires are secure and not in your walkway.

Keeping a healthy lifestyle also prevents falling.

VISION

- Make sure light switches are conveniently placed.
- Turn on the lights.



MEDICATIONS

- Review your medications with your doctor and pharmacist any time you are at the doctor's office, renewing a prescription, or when a new prescription or herbal supplement is added.
- Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about side effects you are having from your medication, especially discuss drowsiness, dizziness, or light-headedness as these increase your possibility of falling.
- Sit at the edge of your bed when rising for the day.
- Move slowly from sitting to standing or when lying down to standing.



EXERCISE

- You will build stronger muscles and better coordination.
- You feel better.
- Always consult a physician before starting a new exercise routine.

ADDITIONAL THINGS

- Push up to stand using the arms of a chair or a steady table.
- Wear sturdy non-slip shoes, slippers, and socks. Keep emergency numbers near your phone.
- Consider an emergency call button.
- Keep your cell phone in your pocket.
- Keep emergency numbers and your medication list updated in the File of Life. The File of Life should be kept on your refrigerator for emergencies. You can get a File of Life by the Library in the Gathering Space or you can request one from the parish nurse.
- Use a three prong cane or walker as advised by your physician.
- Sign up for a fall prevention class through your doctor's office or through Safe Communities. This link connects you to their website, classes, and presentations.

Now, it is time for you to look around your home and consider steps you can take to prevent a fall and be prepared if you do fall in your home. Please call the Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish Nurse at 608-231-4614, if you are looking for resources or advice.

"...though we stumble, we shall not fall..." Psalm 37:24