

Prevent Falls and Fractures

Many things can cause a fall. Your eyesight, hearing and reflexes might not be as sharp as they were when you were younger. Diabetes, heart disease, or problems with your thyroid, nerves, feet, or blood vessels can affect your balance. Some medicines can cause you to feel dizzy or sleepy, making you more likely to fall. Other causes include safety hazards in the home or community environment.

If you take care of your overall health, you may be able to lower your chances of falling. Here are a few tips from the National Institute on Aging to help you avoid falls and broken bones.

Stay physically active. Regular exercise improves muscles and makes you stronger. It also helps keep your joints, tendons, and ligaments flexible. Mild weight-bearing activities, such as walking or climbing stairs, may slow bone loss from osteoporosis.

Have your eyes and hearing tested. Even small changes in sight and hearing may cause you to fall.

Find out about the side effects of any medicine you take. If a drug makes you sleepy or dizzy, tell your doctor or pharmacist.

Get enough sleep. Limit the amount of alcohol you drink as even a small amount can affect your balance and reflexes.

Stand up slowly. Getting up too quickly can cause your blood pressure to drop. That can make you feel wobbly.

Use an assistive device if you need help feeling steady when you walk. Appropriate use of canes and walkers can prevent falls. A physical or occupational therapist can help you decide which devices might be helpful and teach you how to use them safely.

Be very careful when walking on wet or icy surfaces. Try to have sand or salt spread on icy areas by your front or back door.

Wear non-skid, rubber-soled, low-heeled shoes or lace-up shoes with non-skid soles that fully support your feet. It is important that the soles are not too thin or too thick.

Always tell your doctor if you have fallen since your last check-up, even if you aren't hurt when you fall. A fall can alert your doctor to a new medical problem

or problems with your medication or eyesight that can be corrected. Your doctor may suggest physical therapy, a walking aid, or other steps to help prevent future falls.