

You CAN prevent falls!



The facts

Falls are the leading cause of injury among older adults in Canada:

- **20-30%** experience at least one fall each year
- **95%** of all hip fractures are due to a fall
- **50%** of all falls causing hospitalization happen **at home**

Falls can result in chronic pain, reduced mobility, loss of independence and even death.

Protect yourself

Anyone can fall. But as we age, our risk of falling becomes greater. That's the bad news. The good news is that falls can be prevented. The first step to avoiding falls is to understand what causes them. For example, poor balance, decreased muscle and bone strength, reduced vision or hearing, and unsafe conditions in and around your home can increase your chance of falling. Staying safe and on your feet is a matter of taking some steps to protect yourself.

You **can** prevent falls by making the needed adjustments to your home and lifestyle, and by making sure you eat well, stay fit, and use whatever devices will help your daily life while keeping you safe. Your independence and well-being are at stake. Take action!

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CHECKLIST

Identify and remove hazards with this checklist:

Your home

Exterior

- ☐ Keep front steps and walkway in good repair and free of snow, ice and leaves.
- ☐ Keep front entrance well lit.
- ☐ Put garden tools such as hoses and rakes away when not using them.

Living room and bedroom

- ☐ Reduce clutter! Get rid of loose wires and cords as well as any other obstacles.
- ☐ Consider using a cordless phone to avoid rushing to answer.
- ☐ Have good lighting throughout the house and install night lights.
- ☐ Make sure the path is clear between the bedroom and bathroom.
- ☐ Get rid of scatter mats or make sure they are non-slip.
- ☐ Get out of your bed or chair slowly; moving suddenly can make you dizzy.

Kitchen

- ☐ Store kitchen supplies and pots and pans in easy-to-reach locations.

- ☐ Store heavy items in lower cupboards.
- ☐ Always wipe up any spills immediately to prevent slipping.
- ☐ If you use floor wax, use the non-skid kind.

Stairs

- ☐ Make sure your stairs are well lit.
- ☐ Install solid handrails on both sides of the stairway.
- ☐ Remove your reading glasses when you go up and down the stairs.
- ☐ Never rush up or down the stairs. It's a major cause of falls.

Bathroom

- ☐ Ensure you have non-slip surfaces for the tub and shower.
- ☐ Install well-anchored grab bars by the toilet and bath to help you sit and stand.
- ☐ Use a raised toilet seat, and a bath seat in the shower, if you need them.
- ☐ Keep the floor clear of water or obstacles.



Your health



Eat well to stay strong

- Enjoy a variety of nutritious foods. Include milk and alternatives, meat and alternatives, grains, as well as lots of vegetables and fruit.
- Don't skip meals. It can cause weakness and dizziness.
- Drink water regularly to prevent dehydration and dizziness.
- Eat at least three servings of calcium rich food daily and talk to your health care provider about taking a vitamin D supplement to keep your bones strong.



Keep fit & improve your balance

- Engage in 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every week. It's your best defence against falls.
- Add strength and balance activities like lifting weights and Tai Chi, at least two days per week.
- Consult your doctor before you start an exercise program.



Use medication wisely

- Have a medication review every year.
- Keep an up-to-date list.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist about possible side effects of prescription, over-the-counter or natural health products.
- Read directions carefully so you're aware of potential reactions with other medications.
- Talk to your doctor or pharmacist if you experience drowsiness, dizziness, unsteadiness, or blurred vision.
- Don't mix alcohol with medications. Alone or in combination with drugs, alcohol can cause falls.



Use safety aids

- Aids to daily living can keep you safe and active.
- Wear your glasses and hearing aid.
- Consider using a walker or cane and make sure that it is the correct height.
- Wear well-fitted shoes or slippers with closed, low heels and non-slip soles.
- Find out about other gadgets that make your life safer: reachers, ice grippers, hip protectors, etc.
- Use them!



If you fall...

- Try to land on your buttocks to prevent more serious injuries.
- Don't rush to get up. Make sure you are not injured before trying to get up or letting others help you get up.
- Don't let the fear of falling again prevent you from being active. Inactivity creates an even greater risk of falling.
- Report falls to your health care provider to determine the cause and prevent another fall.

For more information

Please contact Ottawa Public Health at **613-580-6744** (TTY: 613-580-9656) or email healthsante@ottawa.ca

Division of Children, Seniors and Healthy Development, Public Health Agency of Canada
www.publichealth.gc.ca/seniors

Cette publication est disponible en français sous le titre: *Vous POUVEZ éviter les chutes!*

Make a plan to reduce your risk for having a fall.

Things I need to do	By when	☒