

## Many falls are *preventable*.

- The tips below will help you understand **causes** and **who** can help.
- A well rounded approach is required.
- If you do fall, please discuss with your doctor and identify possible causes.
- Keep a log of the fall situation.
  - Time it occurred
  - Activity you were doing
  - Where
  - Were you able to get up
- Know a plan, how to get up from a fall, who to call and how.
- From the areas listed below, **make a note** of the areas you need to work on.

### Fall Prevention Tips:

**Medication reviews:** Having multiple medicines or combinations of medicines can make you sleepy, dizzy or affect your balance and can cause you to fall. Review the medication list with your **doctor** and **pharmacist** regularly.

**Diabetes management:** Manage your blood sugar at a stable level, to prevent feeling faint. In the long run it will also prevent damage to eyesight and prevent weakness and sensory loss in the feet. A **doctor** or **nurse specialist** will help you learn the management.

**Vision:** A brain injury or stroke may affect your ability to judge distance or depth, ability to see clearly and deal with changes in lighting. Work with your **occupational therapist** and **neuroptometrist** to make sure that vision has been corrected. Follow up with annual vision checks. Read more under the 'vision' section.

**Ear disorders:** Sudden change in head position or certain activities may trigger dizziness, vertigo or loss of balance. The inner ear has structures that sense position and connect to the brain, (vestibular system) so after an injury they can be affected. An **ENT specialist** can diagnose and treat an inner ear infection or fluid buildup or refer you to a **physical therapist** for vestibular rehabilitation exercises.

**Home modifications** such as installing a hand rail or grab bar in the bathroom, modifying some furniture, removing clutter in the hallway can go a long way in preventing falls. Refer to the 'Accessibility and Home Activity' for ideas on home and kitchen layout to prevent falls. It is also important to follow the recommendations of your **physical and/or occupational therapists**.

**Exercise the body** to improve balance and leg strength which will lower your chances of falling. An example is Tai Chi. Work with a **physical or occupational therapist** for an individualized exercise plan to improve coordination, flexibility and endurance as well.

# Fall Prevention



**Exercise the mind:** to improve reaction times, thinking skills, paying attention, working on more than one task at a time. Sometimes just lack of attention to the environment, can cause a fall. A **speech therapist & occupational therapist** can help provide activities to do at home. Refer to the section on 'Activities to do at home'.

**Assistive devices:** Using the correct assistive device such as a walker, cane or wheelchair as recommended by your **physical therapist** can prevent falls. Make sure they are fitted to your size, maintain them well and replace worn out tips of walkers and canes.

**Foot wear and foot care:** Wear non-skid shoes with good support. The recommended foot braces or orthotics for weakness or decreased sensation in the feet. Avoid walking in, socks, floppy slippers and shoes with slippery soles. Consult a **podiatrist and physical therapist**.

**Nutrition:** Not eating enough or the right food can lead to weakness and bone loss, which can lead to a fall or result in more injury after a fall. Not drinking enough can cause dehydration and unsteadiness. A **dietician** can help.

**Depression** can lead to reduced awareness of one's surroundings and less able to react quickly. A **psychologist** or **counselor** can help with strategies.

**Dizziness when you get up suddenly** also called 'Postural hypotension' is the sudden drop in blood pressure from change in position. Get up slowly from lying down to sitting wait till you feel steady then stand up.

**Choose safer ways to do things:** Reaching too high or too low, climbing onto a chair to reach, not turning on the light, being in a hurry, can lead to a fall. Keep everyday things within easy reach, take your time and pay attention

**Avoid wet surfaces:** Clean up spills, use a non-skid bath mat on the floor outside the shower and a non-skid mat inside the tub or shower.

**A medical alert system monitoring service** allows a person to push a button if a fall occurs or another emergency, to get immediate assistance. An alternative is always keeping a cell phone close to you with emergency numbers programmed for speed dial.

**Good Lighting:** Replace fused light bulbs immediately. Use night lights in the room and bathroom. A bed side light within easy reach is essential.