

# Patient's Guide To Preventing Falls

Falling is a common and serious problem for older persons. Falling can result in injuries such as broken bones and cuts, and the need for hospital care and/or nursing home admission. After the age of 60 the frequency and severity of fall-related complications increase.

If you have even a minor fall you should tell your doctor. Many times falls can be prevented by making simple changes, such as adjusting the dose of your medication(s), getting new eyeglasses or safety proofing your home. Your doctor can assess your risk of falling and help you avoid falling in the future.

Use the *My Current Medications* portion of this brochure to write down all your medications and take it to your next doctor visit.

## What You Can Do:

- Tell your doctor if you have fallen and describe the circumstances of the fall(s).
- Tell your doctor if you have trouble walking or ever feel “off balance.”
- Tell your doctor if you have weakness or other problems with your legs.
- Tell your doctor if you use walking aids, such as a cane or walker.
- Tell your doctor about any vision problems and any other medical problems you may have.
- Go to the Emergency Room if you experience a sudden change in your gait.
- Assess your home for safety hazards such as poor lighting, loose rugs and make changes to reduce the risk of falls.
- Tell your doctor about all medications you are taking, including “over-the-counter” medications, herbal remedies, or vitamins.
- Carefully read any written information that comes with your medicine, and save it for future use.
- Ask about any side effects from medication, and what to do if side effects occur.
- Ask what foods, drinks, other medicines, dietary supplements, or activities you should avoid while taking a medication.

## What Your Doctor Can Do:

Your doctor can assess your risk of falling by talking with you. Your doctor can:

- Review your history of falling and all medications.
- Evaluate your balance and gait. Examine your vision.
- Evaluate the mobility and strength of your legs.
- Evaluate your blood pressure, heart rate and rhythm.
- Review the use of walking aids, such as walkers and canes.

After your evaluation, your doctor may make recommendations to prevent future falls. Recommendations could include:

- Modifying or adjusting the dose of your medications.
- Starting an exercise program with balance training.
- Gait training and training in the proper use of walking aids.
- Correcting any hazards in your home that could cause falls, such as poor lighting and loose carpets.
- Treating any heart rhythm abnormalities.
- Treating low blood pressure.
- Having your vision retested.



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# My Current Medications

Use the space below to write down your current medications and take this form with you to your doctor appointments. Be sure to include any non-prescription medications you are taking (such as pain medications, supplements, and herbal remedies).

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Dose \_\_\_\_\_ Reason Taken \_\_\_\_\_  
When Taken (include all times during the day) \_\_\_\_\_

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