

TEN TIPS TO HELP PREVENT FALLS

Falls often cause serious and painful injuries, especially in the elderly. Common injuries are ankle, hip, wrist and shoulder fractures as well as back and neck injuries. These injuries can often require lengthy hospitalisation and rehabilitation. To help prevent falls, the Australia Physiotherapy Association recommends the following tips:

1. Clear away any clutter in the home. Make your home a safer place by removing any boxes, papers, tools, electrical cords or other items that might cause a passage way to become an obstacle.
2. Be careful of wet and slippery surfaces. Be sure to mop up water on the floor and avoid slippery surfaces such as moss covered ground or shiny polished floors. Wear comfortable non-slip footwear.
3. Beware of uneven ground. It's very easy to trip over small steps, cracks in concrete, uneven floor tiles, rugs on the floor and even your beloved pet.
4. Some medications can cause drowsiness, dizziness, vagueness and balance problems which all contribute to the risk of falling. Talk to your doctor about the side effects of medication prescribed to you and the best way to manage these side effects.
5. Chronic illness such as severe arthritis, back injury, Parkinson's disease, osteoporosis or heart conditions can increase the risk of falling. You can reduce the risks by having appropriate medical treatment and by consulting a physiotherapist.
6. A loss of hearing can cause dizziness and balance problems. See your doctor for a checkup if you've noticed these symptoms.
7. Be aware of any changes in your eyesight and seek appropriate help. Any deterioration in your eyesight can distort the appearance of objects and sometimes you may not see anything at all.
8. Always ensure you have adequate lighting. Even in daylight hours a dark place may hide a box on the ground or a small step which can cause you to fall.
9. Good balance and gait will help to reduce the risk of falls. Specific balance exercises will help to improve balance problems. A walking stick or frame can often increase your safety and help keep you mobile.
10. Keep fit and active. A physiotherapist can prescribe an exercise program to help you maintain your strength, endurance, flexibility and balance which will help to reduce the risk of falls and the incidence of injury related to falls

Information provided by the Australian Physiotherapy Association