



# Senior Safety Handout

## Some Possible Risk Factors for Balance Impairments:



### Physical Factors

- Muscle Weakness
- Joint Stiffness
- Inactivity
- Aging
- Certain Medications

### Medical Conditions:

- Muscle Weakness
- Parkinson's Disease
- Brain Injury
- Multiple Sclerosis
- Arthritis
- Spinal Cord Injury

## How to Prevent Falls

- Get yearly eye exams
- Wear your prescribed eyeglasses
- Be aware of small children/pets
- Remove clutter
- Wear non-skid shoes
- Stand up slowly to avoid dizziness
- Carry small (light) loads
- See a Physical Therapist if you feel unsteady
- Begin a regular exercise program

- ✓ **1/3 of People over 65 will fall this year**
- ✓ **1/2 of people over 80 will fall this year**
- ✓ **75% of Americans over the age of 70 are diagnosed with having "abnormal" balance**

## How to Make Your Home Safer

- Remove throw rugs
- Provide adequate lighting in your home
- Use nightlights
- Have grab bars next to your toilet/shower
- Use cane/walker if recommended by health care professional
- Use railing when climbing stairs





# Home Safety Checklist for Fall Hazards

This room-by-room checklist highlights possible fall hazards. If you mark "Yes" to any of these questions, consider the suggestions to help reduce your chances of falling.

## BATHROOM

POSSIBLE HAZARD	YES	SUGGESTIONS
Is the path from the bedroom to the bathroom dark?		Nightlights can be helpful in lighting the way.
Are towel racks used to balance or grab onto while getting in or out of the bathtub/shower?		Towel racks may not be mounted well enough to support a person's weight. Install grab rails in the appropriate places.
Is it difficult to stand during a shower?		A shower seat allows older adults to shower without getting tired of standing or risking a fall because of dizziness.
Is the shower floor and/or bathtub slippery?		Install non-skid strips or a non-slip mat.
Is there any water on the floor after a bath/shower? Are there leaks from the tub/ shower?		Patch leaks with caulk or other appropriate materials. Wipe up water immediately to prevent slipping. Use a bath mat with a slip resistant backing.
Is it necessary to reach far or turn around to get towels, shampoo, and soap?		A shower/bath storage unit that attaches to the side of the tub or shower wall can reduce the need to reach or turn around to get things.
Is it difficult to get on and off the toilet?		It may be helpful to raise the seat and/or install handrails. Replace the toilet with a higher toilet and/or install

# BEDROOM

POSSIBLE HAZARD	YES	SUGGESTIONS
Is there a long reach from the bed to a light?		Moving the lamp closer to the bed or attaching a light to the headboard reduces the chances of falling.
Is it necessary to get out of bed or reach far to get to the telephone?		A longer phone extension cord or a cordless phone within easy reach of the bed can reduce the chances of falling.
Is it necessary to get out of bed or reach far to get eyeglasses?		Store glasses within reach of the bed.
Are there telephone, light, or television cords running along the floor on the walkways?		Cords are a tripping hazard. Reroute cords so they do not cross walking paths and/or get an electrician to install additional outlets.
Is there clutter (clothes, shoes, books, etc.) on the floor?		Remove clutter from walkways to reduce the chances of tripping over it.
Is it common to get up many times during the night to use the bathroom?		Place a portable commode near the bed to eliminate nighttime trips to the bathroom.

# KITCHEN

POSSIBLE HAZARD	YES	SUGGESTIONS
Are there floor mats or rugs in the kitchen?		Remove throw rugs or secure them to the floor with slip-resistant backing.
Is it necessary to reach far, bend over, or climb on a stool to get commonly-used kitchen items and foods?		Rearrange cupboards and drawers so that items used most often are waist high. Use a sturdy step stool with a grab bar to reach items stored overhead.
Is there liquid, food, grease, or other clutter on the floor?		Sweep often and wipe up liquid immediately to reduce the chances of slipping.

# LIVING AREAS

POSSIBLE HAZARD	YES	SUGGESTIONS
Do carpets, rugs, and floor coverings have frayed corners or rolled-up edges?		Remove damaged floor coverings or secure them well with double-sided tape, nails, etc. It's important to have a flat, sturdy walkway.
Are there throw rugs in walkways?		The best thing to do is to remove throw rugs. Put double-sided tape on them so they don't slip.
Are chairs and couches low to the ground?		Higher chairs and armrests are helpful for easing into a sitting position.
Is it necessary to get up to answer the phone?		Keep a phone nearby so you don't have to get up quickly if the phone rings. Cordless phones are helpful. Keep a phone close to the floor in order to call for help in the event of a fall.
Do you have to walk over or around electrical cords or wires?		Tape cords and wires to the wall or have an electrician install additional outlets.
Are there newspapers, boxes, shoes, etc. on the floor?		Remove clutter from walkways to avoid tripping.
Do you need to walk around furniture to get through the living area?		It's best to have a straight path, clear of furniture. Rearrange furniture to provide for obstacle-free walking.
Do you have to reach up to pull cords to lights or ceiling fans?		Install longer cords or link ceiling lights/fans to a light switch on the wall to eliminate the need to look and reach up.

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