

USF Osteoporosis Program

Fall Prevention and Safety Tips Make the first step to make the next one safer!

The most common causes of fall:

- **Poor vision and hearing:** Get your vision and hearing checked. Certain vision and/or hearing disorders can increase the risk of falls.
- **Medications:** Please consult your doctor and carefully review your medications with him. Some medications may have unwanted effects such as dizziness, sleepiness, or dehydration which can increase the risk of falls.
- **Balance:** Weakness and poor balance can lead to falls. Exercise and do physical activities regularly to gain balance and strength. It is recommended that you exercise for at least 2 1/2 hours per week, and this can be split into intervals of at least 10 minutes at a time throughout the day/week.
- **Chronic conditions** including disorders that cause weakness in the extremities, poor grip strength, balance disorders and cognitive impairment can increase the risk of falls.
- **Lack of house safety:** Eliminate all environmental hazards to reduce risk of fall as described below.

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Make your home safer!

Fall Prevention in your Home

Indoor:

❖ Bathrooms:

- Install grab bars and folding shower seats in the bathroom.
- Use a rubber mat to avoid slipping in the tub and shower.
- Install a riser seat (elevated seat) on the toilet.
- Place a rubber mat in the shower to prevent slipping.
- Use non-slip treads on ankle-foot orthoses at night to decrease fall risk when walking to and from the bathroom.

❖ Bedrooms:

- Have a charged flashlight in easy to reach from your bed place.
- Sit down to get dressed.
- Avoid rapid moves.
- Sit down and stand up slowly to prevent dizziness that could lead to falls.
- Keep loose items off the floor (put away items you can trip over).
- Use nightlights for better nighttime visibility.
- Keep lamps on each side of the bed within easy reach.
- Use safe seating. Be cautious with anything on rollers or rockers.

❖ Kitchen:

- Keep your most frequently used items on shelves that are easy to reach.
- Do not use high-gloss wax products for cleaning.
- Get a steady step stool with a bar to hold on to.
- Avoid standing on the top of a chair or any other furniture.
- Use non-skid mats or rugs in commonly wet areas.

❖ Floors:

- Remove tripping hazards: chargers, cords, area rugs, etc.
- Attach slip-resistant backing to your carpets and rugs.
- Pay close attention to thresholds and possible differences in floor levels at room entrances.
- If spills happen, clean them up as soon as you can.
- Avoid placing small objects on the floor (for example: papers, books, shoes, and toys).
- Do not polish your floors.

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- If you need to round an obstacle like a piece of furniture, ask someone to take it away and make your path clear.

❖ Stairs and Hallways:

- Fix every loose carpet section on the stairs securely to prevent the risk of tripping.
- Install railings (two if possible), and mark the edge of the stairs with brightly colored tape.
- Provide adequate lighting of stairwells and have light switches installed at the top and the bottom of stairs.
- Do not change stairway light bulbs by yourself. Ask someone to change it for you.
- Use nightlights to ensure that the route from the bedroom to the bathroom is well-lit.
- Remove loose things like charger cords, clothing, and shoes from hallways, stairs, and walkways.

❖ All Areas (General):

- If you live alone, consider carrying a cell phone with you all the time to call for help if you fall.
- Use walkers or canes if needed.
- Put everything in the right places to keep your home clean.
- Arrange with a family member or friend for daily contact. Try to have at least one person who knows where you are at all times.
- If you need corrective lenses, be sure to use them at night and during the day to see your path clearly.
- Wearing well-fitting shoes that support and fit properly can reduce the risk of falls. Try not to walk around in socks, stockings, or floppy, backless slippers.

Outdoor:

- During the winter, keep your walkways and driveway clean of snow and ice.
- In the autumn, avoid walking on wet leaves. Keep your walkways unobstructed of leaves and branches.
- Fix loose stones, planks, or bricks in outdoor areas, such as stairs or patios.
- Do not walk with hands in your pockets in order to have support in case of falling.
- Hands should be free. Wear a shoulder bag or a backpack.
- Eliminate any potholes or trip hazards on walkways and a backyard.
- Consider wearing hip protectors or hip pads for added protection in case you fall.
- Use a seatbelt at all times.
- Use anti-tippers on wheelchairs.
- Wear pool shoes for protection against falls when walking on slippery surfaces around water.

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References:

- Bone Health & Osteoporosis Foundation:
<https://www.bonehealthandosteoporosis.org/preventing-fractures/>
- The NIH Osteoporosis and Related Bone Diseases National Resource Center:
<https://www.bones.nih.gov/health-info/bone/osteoporosis/fracture>
- Clarke, B.M.C., Mayo Clinic guide to preventing & treating osteoporosis. 2014
- Center for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/falls/index.html>