

BACK FACTS: Preventing Falls

Everyone can fall, but the risk of falling increases as you get older. Many older Canadians suffer falls every year and this can take a toll on independence. Hip fractures are the most common type of fall injury among seniors and a significant number of injury-related deaths can also be traced back to a fall. Here are some tips to prevent falls.

Exercise. Making your body stronger is one of the best ways to prevent falls. It also helps you feel better. Exercises that help improve your balance and coordination, such as Tai Chi, yoga and dancing are best. Health Canada recommends at least 30-60 minutes of exercise a day for older adults. A 10-minute walk in the morning and a 10-minute walk at lunch all add up!



Eat well. Maintaining a healthy diet and not skipping meals can increase your energy and strength. Missing meals can lead to weakness, irritability and dizziness. Follow the recommendations from Canada's Food Guide. It's available on the Health Canada website www.hc-sc.gc.ca

Fall proof your home

In the Halls and on the Stairs

- Mark the edges of stairs clearly with a non-slip grip in an easy-to-see colour.
- Make sure hallways and walkways are cleared of anything that you can trip over (i.e. books, shoes, bags).
- Replace light bulbs with a slightly higher wattage to make your home brighter. As you age, brighter lights may help you see better.
- Install night lights in halls and stairways.
- Install handrails on *both* sides of staircases and take-off your reading glasses when walking down the stairs.

In the Bathroom

- Install grab bars next to your toilet and in the tub or shower.
- Consider a raised toilet seat and a bench for the tub or shower.
- Use non-slip mats *inside* and *outside* the bathtub and shower.
- Quickly dry-up any wet areas on the floor.

In the Kitchen

- Clean up spills quickly to prevent slipping.
- Put commonly used items on lower shelves and cabinets so a step stool is not needed.

More tips

- Wear shoes with good support and non-slip soles.
- Use aids for walking, balancing, hearing and seeing if needed. Have your vision and hearing checked annually.
- Ensure that a telephone is within reach of your bed and keep emergency numbers nearby.
- Always sit down to put on or take off shoes and clothes.
- Don't be too proud to ask for help for things you cannot do on your own.

Check it out

- Have your MD or pharmacist review your medications. Some medications can cause dizziness and weakness, which can affect your balance and perception. Make sure that your MD or pharmacist explains all of the possible side effects of your medications.
- Have your strength and balance assessed by a chiropractor. A doctor of chiropractic can provide specific advice to help you stay steady on your feet.

Canada's chiropractors – here to help

Chiropractors can help you prevent falls by assessing your strength and balance. Should you suffer an injury from a fall, a chiropractor can also provide treatment for your pain.

Fact: 80 per cent of Canadians will suffer from back pain in their lifetime. If required, a chiropractor can treat your pain through a variety of methods. These can include: spinal and joint adjustment, modalities such as ultrasound or TENS, soft tissue therapy and therapeutic exercises.

For more information on preventing falls or to locate a chiropractor near you, please visit the Canadian Chiropractic Association website www.chiropracticcanada.ca.

Put your best foot forward. Don't let a fall get you down.



The Canadian Chiropractic Association

www.chiropracticcanada.ca