

# Stay Healthy and On Your Feet

Check your risk for falling

Patient Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Please circle "Yes" or "No" for each statement below.			Why it matters	
1.	Yes (2)	No (0)	I have fallen in the past year. How many falls _____? Where you injured? Y/ N	People who have fallen once are likely to fall again.
2.	Yes (1)	No (0)	Sometimes I feel unsteady when I am walking.	Unsteadiness or needing support while walking are signs of poor balance.
3.	Yes (1)	No (0)	I am worried about falling.	People who are worried about falling are more likely to fall.
<b>If you answered 'Yes' to any of the above questions, please complete questions 4-12.</b>				
4.	Yes (2)	No (0)	I use or have been advised to use a cane or walker to get around safely.	People who have been advised to use a cane or walker may already be more likely to fall.
5.	Yes (1)	No (0)	I steady myself by holding onto furniture when walking at home.	This is also a sign of poor balance.
6.	Yes (1)	No (0)	I need to push with my hands to stand up from a chair.	This is a sign of weak leg muscles, a major reason for falling.
7.	Yes (1)	No (0)	I have some trouble stepping up onto a curb.	This is also a sign of weak leg muscles.
8.	Yes (1)	No (0)	I often have to rush to the toilet.	Rushing to the bathroom, especially at night, increases your chance of falling.
9.	Yes (1)	No (0)	I have lost some feeling in my feet.	Numbness in your feet can cause stumbles and lead to falls.
10.	Yes (1)	No (0)	I take medicine that sometimes makes me feel light-headed or more tired than usual.	Side effects from medicines can sometimes increase your chance of falling.
11.	Yes (1)	No (0)	I take medicine to help me sleep or improve my mood.	These medicines can sometimes increase your chance of falling.
12.	Yes (1)	No (0)	I often feel sad or depressed.	Symptoms of depression, such as not feeling well or feeling slowed down, are linked to falls.
<b>Total _____</b>			<b>Add up the number of points for each "yes" answer. If you scored 4 points or more, you may be at risk for falling. Discuss this checklist with your health care provider.</b>	

This checklist was developed by the Greater Los Angeles VA Geriatric Research Education Clinical Center and affiliates and is a validated fall risk self-assessment tool (Rubenstein et al. J Safety Res; 2011:42(6)493-499). Adapted with permission of the authors.

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## Six steps to reduce your fall risk

An older adult falls every second of every day and the result can be devastating. More than 95% of hip fractures are caused by a fall. However, there are simple steps you or a loved one can take to reduce your risk. Stay safe with these tips!

1

### Find a good exercise program to build balance, strength and flexibility.

If you need help, start by working with a Physical Therapist. To learn more about Tai Chi and fall prevention classes check out your local community or senior center or Providence's Free Strong For Life: <https://oregon.providence.org/our-services/s/strong-for-life-exercise-program/>



2

### Talk to your health care provider

Share your worries about falling or if you have fallen. Ask for an evaluation of your fall risk.



3

### Regularly review your medications with your doctor or pharmacist

Certain drug side effects can increase your risk of falling. Even over the counter drugs, like Benadryl or Tylenol PM have been linked to falls. Take any medication only as prescribed.



4

### Take care of your ears and eyes

Get your vision and hearing checked every 1-2 years and keep your eyeglass prescription current. Your eyes and ears help keep you balanced.



5

### Keep your home safe

Now more important than ever, make sure to remove tripping hazards, such as throw rugs; increase lighting; make stairs safe; and install grab bars in key areas. You may qualify for a home safety assessment from an Occupational or Physical Therapist.



6

### Talk to your friends and family members

Enlist their support in taking simple steps to stay safe. Falls are not just an issue for seniors.



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## Medications that increase your risk of having a fall

**If you are 65 or older, regularly review your medication list with your health care provider and pharmacist.** Many medications have side effects that may increase your risk of having a fall. Consider treatment options that do not involve medications for issues such as difficulty sleeping. These approaches may be safer and more effective. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends working with your health care provider to:

- **STOP** taking unnecessary medications.
- **SWITCH** to safer medications.
- **REDUCE** medication dosages to the lowest effective dose.

### These medications may increase your risk of falling:

- **Over-the-counter medications that contain antihistamines:**  
Allergy medications such as diphenhydramine (Benadryl), chlorpheniramine (Chlor-Trimeton), and doxylamine (Unisom); cold, cough, or pain products that contain antihistamines such as Nyquil, Tylenol PM, and Advil PM.
- **Medications for depression, anxiety, or sleep:**  
Amitriptyline (Elavil); benzodiazepines like clonazepam (Klonopin), lorazepam (Ativan), temazepam (Restoril); or “Z” drugs for sleep like eszopiclone (Lunesta), zolpidem (Ambien), and zaleplon (Sonata).
- **Medications for your bowel and bladder:** Dicyclomine (Bentyl), oxybutynin (Ditropan), and tolterodine (Detrol).
- **Muscle relaxants:** Cyclobenzaprine (Flexeril) and methocarbamol (Robaxin).
- **Other medications:**
  - Blood pressure medications that make you feel dizzy or woozy.
  - Seizure medications that affect your balance.
  - Narcotic pain medications that make you feel sleepy or drowsy.

### References

[https://www.cdc.gov/steady/pdf/steady\\_medication\\_linked\\_to\\_falls\\_rev7-a.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/steady/pdf/steady_medication_linked_to_falls_rev7-a.pdf)  
[http://www.healthinaging.org/files/documents/tipsheets/meds\\_to\\_avoid.pdf](http://www.healthinaging.org/files/documents/tipsheets/meds_to_avoid.pdf)

# 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 handrails.

## 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. Never use a chair as a step stool.
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.

***October is National Physical Therapy Month!***



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