



# Fall Prevention Guide

## Tips and tools to prevent falls at home

Part of aging is recognizing that when it comes to falls, we may not get up like we used to. We have less muscle mass, so we aren't as strong. Our proprioceptors—the neurons in our muscles, tendons and ligaments that help us stay balanced—don't work as well. We may take medications that make us drowsy, dizzy or lightheaded when we stand up too quickly.

These biological changes mean we are more susceptible to falls. But there are steps you can take to reduce the likelihood of taking a tumble.

### SIMPLE TIPS TO PREVENT FALLS

#### 1. Talk to your doctor to assess your risk factors.

Some medications cause side effects and interactions that can increase your risk of falling. Discuss alternatives that don't cause drowsiness, lightheadedness, disorientation or confusion. Certain eye and ear disorders may also impact your risk of falls, as can joint pain, muscle strength, balance and walking style. Depending on your risk factors, your doctor may recommend exercises to help strengthen your bones to keep you more balanced.

**2. Take precautions to make your home safer.** It's important to ensure that the home provides a safe environment. Use the **Home Safety Checklist** in this guide for steps you can take to safeguard your home.

**3. Use assistive devices.** Canes, walkers, wheelchairs and scooters can increase stability and prevent unexpected falls from occurring.

**4. Stay active.** With your doctor's approval, gentle physical activities can help reduce the risk of falls by improving strength, balance, coordination and flexibility. See **Exercises to Improve Balance** in this guide for suggestions.

**5. Have your eyes examined.** Have your eyes checked by an eye doctor at least once a year and update your eyeglasses if needed. If you have bifocal or progressive lenses, you may want to get a pair of glasses with only your distance prescription for outdoor activities, such as walking.

**6. Wear sensible shoes.** Whether indoors or outside, wear rubber-soled, non-slip supportive shoes to help prevent slipping.

**7. Seek assistance from an in-home professional caregiver.** Sometimes preventative measures in the home can only go so far. Support from a professional caregiver can help prevent falls and reduce the fear of falling.

**8. Get a no obligation home assessment from SYNERGY HomeCare.** Contact us to learn how we can help identify fall risks and make recommendations to create a safer home environment.

## Home safety checklist

As more older adults choose to age in place in the comfort of their own home, it's important to ensure that the home provides a safe environment. Take these preventive measures to safeguard your home.

### REMOVE TRIPPING HAZARDS.

- ☐ Remove clutter throughout the home.
- ☐ Remove electrical cords and phone cords from walkways.
- ☐ Remove throw rugs or secure them in place with double-sided tape or non-slip backing.
- ☐ Check for uneven floors and repair loose, wooden floorboards and carpeting right away.
- ☐ Keep frequently used items in cabinets you can reach without using a step stool.
- ☐ Get a safety grabber that helps retrieve items that are out of reach.

### LIGHT UP YOUR LIVING SPACE.

- ☐ Keep your home brightly lit, particularly in hallways and stairways. Use bright bulbs in lamps, consider curtains and drapes that reduce glare, and make sure staircases are well lit.
- ☐ Place a lamp within reach of your bed in case you need to get up in the middle of the night.
- ☐ Install motion sensor lights that will light up at night when getting out of bed. Some options light up a room when you step out of bed, turn lights off when you return to bed, and can send a notification to a caregiver if the lights remain illuminated for an extended period of time.

### INSTALL ASSISTIVE DEVICES.

- ☐ Install rails for stairs/steps.
- ☐ In the bathroom, install grab bars (including in the shower), a raised toilet seat, a shower chair and a handheld shower head.
- ☐ Install a hand-held shower nozzle for bathing while sitting down.
- ☐ Install a textured floor in the bathtub and shower, or use stickers as an alternative.



## Exercises to improve balance

Physical activity can go a long way toward fall prevention. Fortunately, exercising doesn't have to consist of high-cardio workouts that will stress the body. Instead, there are much easier, safer and less intense exercises for seniors that align perfectly with everyday activities. Consider activities like **yoga**, **tai chi** and **dance** to improve balance. Here are a few other exercises to try if your doctor approves:

- **Stand on one leg.** One of the most basic exercises involves balancing on one leg. Simply shift your weight onto one foot while raising the other foot slightly off the floor. Hold the position for up to a minute before switching legs and repeating. You can make it more challenging by closing your eyes, moving your arms, swinging your non-standing leg or tilting your head from side to side. Or try counting backwards while balancing.





- **Climb the stairs.** The process of climbing stairs means taking one step after another and having to balance when standing on one leg. Increasing the ability to balance by climbing stairs can improve balance when walking on the ground. It also improves flexibility, making you less susceptible to hip, ankle and knee injuries. Make sure to start with just a few steps and hold both railings to avoid accidents. Progressively take more steps and rely less on the railings as you feel comfortable.
- **Go for a walk.** A brief stroll can do wonders for preserving balance as you age. Walking has similar benefits as climbing the stairs—building lower body strength, and improving balance and coordination. Walking is a simple yet effective exercise that keeps you in shape and even lowers your blood pressure.
- **Balance walk.** This activity is much like walking but focuses more on improving your balance rather than exercising. Here's how:
  - Imagine a straight line when you are walking.
  - Put one foot in front of the other, and make sure they don't touch each other.
  - Walk forward on that imaginary straight line, heel to toe, and make sure to take one step at a time.
  - To be safe, walk with a stable object near you. Walk along a wall, a counter or even someone to guide you so you can grab onto them for support if you lose balance.

## Safety first, encouragement always

SYNERGY HomeCare's "Safety First" fall and injury prevention program helps seniors prevent falls and reduces the fear of falling. Our specially trained in-home caregivers also provide support when recovering after a fall or injury.

- Prevent fall-related injuries and long-term complications
- Reduce hospital readmission following surgery or injury
- Maintain independence in the comfort of home
- Increase strength, mobility and coordination
- Build balance and flexibility
- Feel confident and stay active



### SYNERGY HOMECARE OFFERS NO OBLIGATION HOME ASSESSMENTS.

Contact us or find a location near you to learn how we can help identify fall risks and make recommendations to create a safer home environment.

**877-432-2692**

SYNERGYHomeCare.com