

FALL RISK: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW AS A CAREGIVER

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Summer Activities for Seniors

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Fall Risks for Seniors: What Caregivers Can Do to Prevent Them

Too many seniors are injured as a result of falls. Learn what caregivers and seniors can do to reduce the risk of falling.

Believe it or not the CDC ([cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)) has found that the leading cause of death and injury among older Americans is falling down. For their own safety, caregivers and their seniors must take steps to reduce fall risks.

The dangers of falls for seniors are numerous. Everything from minor bruising to death can result depending on the severity of a fall and the individual's health. While not all falls can be prevented, many can be.

Signs a Senior is at High Risk of Falling

The National Institute on Aging ([nihseniorhealth.gov](https://www.nihseniorhealth.gov)) says that losing a steady, healthy balance and gait is common among seniors. Other factors, like certain medications and diseases, can increase difficulty with balance. To determine if a senior is at high risk of falling, watch for the following signs:

- A change in gait
- Difficulty getting in and out of chairs or bed
- Reaching for support when bending, moving, or climbing
- Needing breaks while moving about routinely, like while climbing upstairs
- Straining to see clearly
- Watching one's feet while moving
- Shuffling instead of lifting the feet when walking
- Pain in the joints, back, or lower body
- Diseases like Alzheimer's, Diabetes, or Arthritis

If you notice signs like these, be proactive. Take steps to help seniors with preventative measures around the home and encourage them to practice walking safely outside the home as well.

Common Medical Conditions That Increase Fall Risk

- Arthritis
- Diabetes
- Parkinson's Disease
- Alzheimer's and Dementia
- Chronic Pain
- Dehydration
- Disorders of the Foot or Legs
- Thyroid or Blood Issues
- Weakened Muscles
- Sensory Issues with Hearing, Vision, or Neuropathy

([healthinaging.org](https://www.healthinaging.org))

Free Fall Prevention Checklist

The CDC offers a downloadable checklist for fall prevention. Use the list to determine what changes are needed to make your home a safer place for your senior. https://www.cdc.gov/homeandrecreationsafety/pubs/english/booklet_eng_desktop-a.pdf

Fall Risks and Prevention Strategies at Home



Floors and Stairs

Risk Factors:

- Loose rugs
- Steep steps or inclines
- Slippery surfaces
- Clutter
- Pets that get under foot

Prevention: Add traction surfaces and rails along the walls. Clean up obstacles and secure pets when seniors need to move. Install a chair lift on stairs if needed.



Bathroom

Risk Factors:

- Slippery surfaces
- Hard-to-access showers or tubs
- Lack of support
- Poor ventilation

Prevention: Keep the bathroom ventilated and dry. Add non-slip mats and grab bars. Install more accessible fixtures or seating and grab bars within shower and tub.



Outside the Home

Risk Factors:

- Unfamiliar areas
- Crowds and cluttered places
- Uneven terrain

Prevention: Accompany seniors closely, offering support as needed. Avoid busy hours and crowded locales. Stick to the sidewalk and locations that are familiar.

([homeadvisor.com](https://www.homeadvisor.com))



Kitchen

Risk factors:

- High or low shelves
- Slippery floors
- Poor lighting
- Too much furniture

Prevention: Move common kitchen items to waist level. Add traction pads to floors and increase lighting. Remove or rearrange furniture for easier maneuvering.



Bedroom and Living Area

Risk Factors:

- Dim Lighting
- Clutter or excess furniture
- Lack of phones or night lighting

Prevention: Add lighting, include night lighting and clear a path for easy navigation at any hour. Secure cords, wires, and other tripping hazards behind furniture. Make phones accessible in case help is needed.



Home Care Tip:

Participating in a balance and exercise program decreases fall risk. Contact a doctor, local YMCA, or Area Agency on Aging to find programs nearby for seniors with balance problems.

