Fall Prevention

Why is Fall Prevention important?

One third of people over age 65 have experienced a fall and half of people more than age 80 have reported falling more than once.

Fall prevention may not seem like a lively topic, but it's important. As you get older, physical changes and health conditions — and sometimes the medications used to treat those conditions — make falls more likely. In fact, falls are a leading cause of injury among older adults. Still, fear of falling doesn't need to rule your life. Instead, consider these simple fall-prevention strategies.

Remove home hazards

Take a look around your home. Your living room, kitchen, bedroom, bathroom, hallways and stairways may be filled with hazards. To make your home safer:

- Remove boxes, newspapers, electrical cords and phone cords from walkways.
- Move coffee tables, magazine racks and plant stands from high-traffic areas.
- Secure loose rugs with double-faced tape, tacks or a slip-resistant backing — or remove loose rugs from your home.
- Repair loose, wooden floorboards and carpeting right away.
- Store clothing, dishes, food and other necessities within easy reach.
- Immediately clean spilled liquids, grease or food.
- Use nonslip mats in your bathtub or shower.

Light up your living space

Keep your home brightly lit to avoid tripping on objects that are hard to see. Also:

- Place night lights in your bedroom, bathroom and hallways.
- Place a lamp within reach of your bed for middle-of-the-night needs.
Make clear paths to light switches that aren’t near room entrances. Consider trading traditional switches for glow-in-the-dark or illuminated switches.

- Turn on the lights before going up or down stairs.
- Store flashlights in easy-to-find places in case of power outages

For a safe home environment, make sure you also have the following, and that they are in good working order:

- Smoke detectors (test them monthly and change batteries once/year)
- Carbon monoxide detector
- Emergency numbers by your phone
- Shoes with low heels, good traction, fit well and don’t fall off. Avoid walking in stocking feet.
- Personal response system such as Lifeline.

Keep moving

Physical activity can go a long way toward fall prevention. With your doctor’s OK, consider activities such as walking, water workouts or tai chi — a gentle exercise that involves slow and graceful dance-like movements. Such activities reduce the risk of falls by improving strength, balance, coordination and flexibility.

If you avoid physical activity because you're afraid it will make a fall more likely, tell your doctor. He or she may recommend carefully monitored exercise programs or refer you to a physical therapist. The physical therapist can create a custom exercise program aimed at improving your balance, flexibility, muscle strength and gait.

The ability to perform daily activities and maintain independence requires strong muscles, balance and endurance. Regular physical activity or exercise helps to improve and prevent the decline of muscle strength, balance and endurance, all risk factors for falling. Balance plays an important role in everyday activities such as walking, getting up out of a chair or leaning over to pick up a grandchild. Balance problems can reduce your independence by interfering with activities of daily living. The good news is that participating in regular physical activity can significantly improve balance and reduce your risk for falling! Strengthening the lower body will help give your body a strong foundation and improve muscular function when walking, and doing other activities of daily living.
GUIDELINES FOR HOME EXERCISE

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Frequency
- 2-3 non-consecutive days per week
- 1-2 sets

Intensity
- Rated Perceived Exertion (RPE) 12-14 (somewhat hard)
- 10-15 repetitions
- Rest 60 seconds between each set

Type
- Resistance Bands
  And Dumbbells

Time
- Should not interfere with cardiovascular training

Progression (2 options)
- Increase workload when you can safely complete 15 repetitions during each exercise.

Key Aspects:
- Use slow, controlled movements
- Exhale on exertion
- Avoid straining
- Stop training if you have any joint pain during the movement
- Minimize rest between set exercises
- Burning sensation in muscles is normal

STOP EXERCISE IMMEDIATELY IF YOU EXPERIENCE ANY PAIN.
Calf Raises
- Take your weights in each hand (optional) and stand upright.
- Slowly raise your heels off the ground as high as you can.
- Stay on the balls of your feet for one second.
- Slowly lower your heels to the floor.
- Complete 10-15 repetitions.
- Place your hands on a chair to stabilize yourself if balance is an issue.

Toe Raises
- Take your weights in each hand (optional) and stand upright.
- Slowly raise your toes off the floor as high as you can.
- Be mindful to keep your weight on your heels.
- Slowly lower your toes to the floor.
- Complete 10-15 repetitions.
- Place your hands on a chair to stabilize yourself if balance is an issue.

Lower Body strength exercises – Quadriceps and Glutes

Squat
- Take your weights in each hand (optional) and stand upright.
- Bring weights to shoulder height.
- Bend your knees and squat down like you are about to sit in a chair.
- Keep your knees behind your toes.
- There should be a slight arch in your lower back but no leaning forward.
- Stop when your thighs are parallel with the floor.
- Return to the starting position.
- Complete 10-15 repetitions.

Squat – Single Leg – optional
- Take your weights in each hand (optional) and stand upright.
- Stand on your right leg.
- Bend your knee and squat down like you are sitting in a chair.
- Keep your knee behind your toes.
- There should be a slight arch in your lower back but no leaning forward.
- Stop when your thigh is parallel with the floor.
- Return to the starting position.
- Complete 10-15 repetitions then switch legs.
- Be mindful of your balance and hold onto a chair or place your foot on the floor if necessary.
Lower Body Strength Exercises – Hamstrings

**Dumbbell Stiff Legged Deadlifts**

- Take your weights in each hand (optional) and stand upright.
- Bend your knees slightly.
- Begin by imagining a chair is behind you and you are pushing it back with your bottom.
- Continue pushing back until you feel a slight stretch in the back of your leg.
- Keep your back straight throughout the movement.
- Return to the starting position.
- Complete 10-15 repetitions with good form.

Lower Body Strength Exercises – Hip Flexors, Ankles

**Knee Ups – Alternating**

- Take your weights in each hand (optional) and stand upright.
- Place weights on your thighs just above your knees.
- Slightly bend your knee and raise your right leg off the floor.
- Raise your knee until it is parallel with your waist.
- Slowly lower and then raise your left leg off the floor.
- Continue alternating legs until you complete 10-15 repetitions on each side.

**Ankle Eversion**

- Begin this ankle strengthening exercise with a resistance band around your foot as demonstrated.
- Slowly move your foot and ankle outwards against the resistance band as far as possible and comfortable without pain.
- Complete 10-15 repetitions.

**Ankle Inversion**

- Begin this ankle strengthening exercise with a resistance band around your foot as demonstrated.
- Slowly move your foot and ankle inwards against the resistance band as far as possible and comfortable without pain.
- Complete 10-15 repetitions.

Reference
