

Injuries from a fall sometimes prevent an older adult from returning home to the same independent lifestyle they enjoyed before the fall.

*Many fall injuries happen in **predictable, preventable** ways.*

Keeping as physically fit as possible and avoiding fall hazards in and around the home can help older adults live longer, more independent lives.

Live Injury-Free!

Fall Prevention for Older Adults

- Falls are the leading cause of nonfatal injuries in every age group except ages 15-24 and are the leading cause of injury death among adults 65 years and older in the U.S.
- Each year in Oklahoma, over 7,000 older adults are hospitalized and 225 die from fall-related injuries. Acute care hospital charges for these patients are nearly \$225 million.
- Fall risk increases steadily after 65 years; adults 85 and older have the highest injury rate.
- Risk factors for falls include poor physical health or fitness, medications side effects, uneven walking surfaces, obstacles in and around the home, lack of stair rails, unstable elevated work areas, walking on ice, and fear of falling.

Preventing Falls and Injuries

Physical Health and Fitness

- Stay active by walking and exercising as appropriate; avoid obesity.
- To improve balance, get your ears and eyes checked regularly, do physical therapy to improve balance while standing or walking, use a cane or walker and monitor your blood pressure.
- Take your time while doing tasks (e.g., use caution when getting up from a sitting or lying position, get your balance before walking).
- Have your eyes examined each year and replace glasses as needed.
- Talk to your doctor/pharmacist about medications that may cause dizziness, nausea, or tiredness.
- Avoid alcohol and drug use.

Avoiding Hazards in the Home

- Make sure every room is well lit.
- Floors should be free of obstacles and have even, non-slip surfaces.
- Remove small carpets and electrical cords from the floor.
- Staircases should be well lit, in good repair, have a rail and be free of clutter.
- Put frequently used items on shelves that can be reached easily without using a step stool.
- Keep a telephone and any walking aids within easy reach.
- Bathtubs or shower stalls should have non-slip mats and grab bars. Use a bath bench if you have difficulty climbing in or out of the bathtub.
- Install a toilet that has a higher seat and safety rails.

Avoiding Hazards Outside the Home

- Keep steps in good repair and install handrails.
- Keep sidewalks clear and in good repair.
- Keep the yard even and free of hoses, gardening materials and sporting equipment.
- Organize garages and tool sheds to be easily accessible and clear of obstacles or debris.
- Keep ice and snow clearing equipment on hand, but don't go out on the ice unless absolutely necessary. Wear appropriate footwear and carry a cell phone when walking in inclement weather.
- When shopping, attending church, or visiting other homes, use the same safety habits you use at home: wear appropriate shoes, hold onto rails, use caution while walking and climbing stairs and avoid icy or slippery surfaces.