

# FALL PREVENTION

Falls are a serious public health problem among older adults, as well as persons living with certain diseases and disorders. Simply making changes to the home does not reduce falls. However, certain risk factors in the home environment may contribute to about half of all home falls. Homes that were perfectly convenient one year can cause problems in later years. Changing physical abilities can make daily routines more difficult. It makes sense, then, to make changes to existing homes, or build in features in new construction that will help create a safer environment. Here are some easy ways you can reduce your risk of falling.

- Set up your furniture so that you can walk around without anything blocking your way.
  - If your lighting is dim, use brighter light bulbs. Use a nightlight or keep a flashlight close to you at night.
- Secure electrical cords.
- Remove throw rugs or other loose items from your floor. If you have an area rug covering a slippery floor, make sure the rug does not have any loose or fringed edges.
- Add handrails to stairways.
- Install raised toilet seats.
- If your bathroom is not close to your bedroom (or where you spend most of your time during the day), get a commode. Place it near you so you do not have to walk to the bathroom.
- Install grab bars and handrails next to your toilet and inside your shower. Never use towel racks to pull yourself up because they are not strong enough to hold your weight.
- Apply anti-slip stickers to the floor of your tub or shower.
- Buy a shower chair and a hand-held shower head so you can sit while taking a shower.

- When getting up from a lying position, always sit at the side of the bed or couch for a few minutes before you stand.
- Arrange items in your kitchen and bathroom cabinets at shoulder height so that you don't have to bend too low or reach too high.
  - Wear shoes with low heels and slip resistant soles inside and outside the house; avoid going barefoot or wearing slippers
- Exercise regularly. Exercise makes you stronger and improves your balance and coordination. Eat nutritious foods and stay well hydrated.
- Keep emergency numbers in large print near each phone.
- Put a phone near the floor in case you fall and can't get up.
- Think about wearing an alarm device that will bring help in case you fall and can't get up.

## References:

University of Michigan Health System: <https://biak.us/wp-content/uploads/Prevention/Fall-Safety/preventing-falls-for-all.pdf>

Minnesota Safety Council: <https://www.minnesotasafetycouncil.org/seniorsafe/fallcheck.pdf>