



Older Adult Fall Prevention

WHAT'S BEHIND FALLS AND
WHAT TO DO TO PREVENT OR REDUCE THEM

KENDAL® *at Home*
Together, transforming the experience of aging.®

2030

74 Million
TOTAL OLDER ADULTS

49 Million
FALLS

12 Million
INJURIES

Falls and fall injuries are increasing in the U.S. Annual medical expenses for older adult falls cost over \$31 billion. These costs will surge unless preventive measures are adopted.¹

Every 11 seconds in the United States an older adult visits an emergency room to get treatment for injuries from a fall. And every 19 minutes, an older adult dies from injuries received during a fall.

A trip on a loose rug or power cord, or a slip on a wet floor can change your life. The risk of falling increases with age and if you're 65 or older, you have a one in four chance of falling in a year.



74 older adults die
from a fall every day.¹

To reduce your risk of falling or receiving a serious injury from a fall, we'll look at some simple ways you can stay safe and what to do if you experience a fall.

²Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Why We Fall

Falls are not a side effect of aging, and while that loose rug or wet floor certainly contributes to your fall risk, several other non-environmental factors increase your risk of falling.

NON-ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

- Lower-body weakness
- Difficulties with gait or balance
- Dizziness
- Use of certain medications
- Problems with vision
- Problems with feet or shoes
- Changes in reflexes
- Being tired
- Standing up too quickly

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

- Loose carpet, rugs or mats on floors and stairs
- Electrical cords in the walking path of your home
- Poorly lit rooms, walkways and stairways



How to Quell Worries About Falling

Worrying about falling increases your risk for one because you may change your gait to prevent a fall. If you have concerns about your gait or strength, talk to your doctor, who can perform the necessary tests to see if you need to make any changes.

You're also likely to change your physical activity level if you're concerned about falling. While this may seem like a sensible option, if you limit your physical activity long enough, you will experience a lack of muscle strength, mobility and endurance — all of which increase your risk for falls.

In addition to talking with your physician about your concerns, try these simple things to ease your fear:

EXERCISES TO IMPROVE YOUR BALANCE

The slow, controlled movements and low impact of tai chi help improve balance, flexibility and strength.

Bonus: It also helps with awareness. Yoga is another option for improving balance and strength, and many poses can be done sitting down. Try poses like mountain pose or the single leg stretch.

REVIEW YOUR MEDICINES AND SUPPLEMENTS

Talk to your doctor about the medications and supplements you're taking and if you should adjust them.

Ask about possible side effects that could affect your fall risk, like dizziness or sleepiness.



Looking for
more yoga poses?

[Try these 7 seated poses for improved balance and flexibility.](#)



How to Quell Worries About Falling

GET YOUR VISION CHECKED

Poor vision often results in falls.

But even if your vision is good, wearing corrective lenses like bifocals can impact your ability to safely go up and down stairs or step up onto ledges, for example.

CHECK YOUR SHOES

Just like the wrong pair of glasses can increase your fall risk, so can the wrong pair of shoes.

Get your foot measured professionally every time you shop for shoes, and be sure to choose a pair of shoes with a flexible toe.



Assess Your Shoes

[Try this 1-2-3 balance test from the American Podiatric Medical Association.](#)

How to Prevent Falls as the Seasons Change

In addition to ensuring your home is free from fall hazards, it's as equally important to make sure you're aware of the weather conditions when you leave the house. A wet or icy sidewalk can be a risk for falls as can storm debris and even warmer temperatures. Use these tips to stay safe during all seasons.

SPRING & SUMMER FALLS PREVENTION

Changing weather conditions can bring fall hazards. Watch for these common spring and summer fall risks:

RAIN AND MUD

Mud as well as rain can make surfaces hazardous. If you can, avoid mud-covered walkways. Maximize the traction of your shoes by keeping them free of mud.

STORM DEBRIS

Avoid walkways covered by storm debris. If you can, clear your home's walkways of any debris once the storm has passed. Always be alert to obstacles in your path and if you don't feel safe, turn around and find another way.

CRACKING

The freezing and thawing of the spring months can create hazards like standing water and ice, but they also can cause pavement to crack. Be aware of your walking path and avoid any warped or cracked portions.

FLOODING

Never walk into standing water. It may be deeper than you expect and knock you off your feet.

HEAT ILLNESS

Older adults are at higher risk for developing dehydration and heat illnesses. You can become dizzy from heat and dehydration, which can cause falls. Stay indoors during the hottest part of the day and drink plenty of fluids.

WINTER FALLS PREVENTION

SNOW

Make sure walkways are clear of snow and ice. If you cannot clear your own walkways, hire someone to do it for you. When walking outdoors during winter months, slow down and give yourself plenty of extra time to get to your destination. Avoid walking in snow accumulations deeper than 1 inch, which can cause you to trip.

SHOES

Winterize your shoes by attaching spikeless ice and snow gripper covers. You can find these at most sporting goods stores. Choose new winter shoes that have a rubber sole. This helps you maintain traction on slippery surfaces.

MOBILITY AIDS

If you use a cane or other mobility aid, attach an ice gripper that has spikes to the bottom. These give you a firm grip by penetrating ice and can be purchased online.

ICE

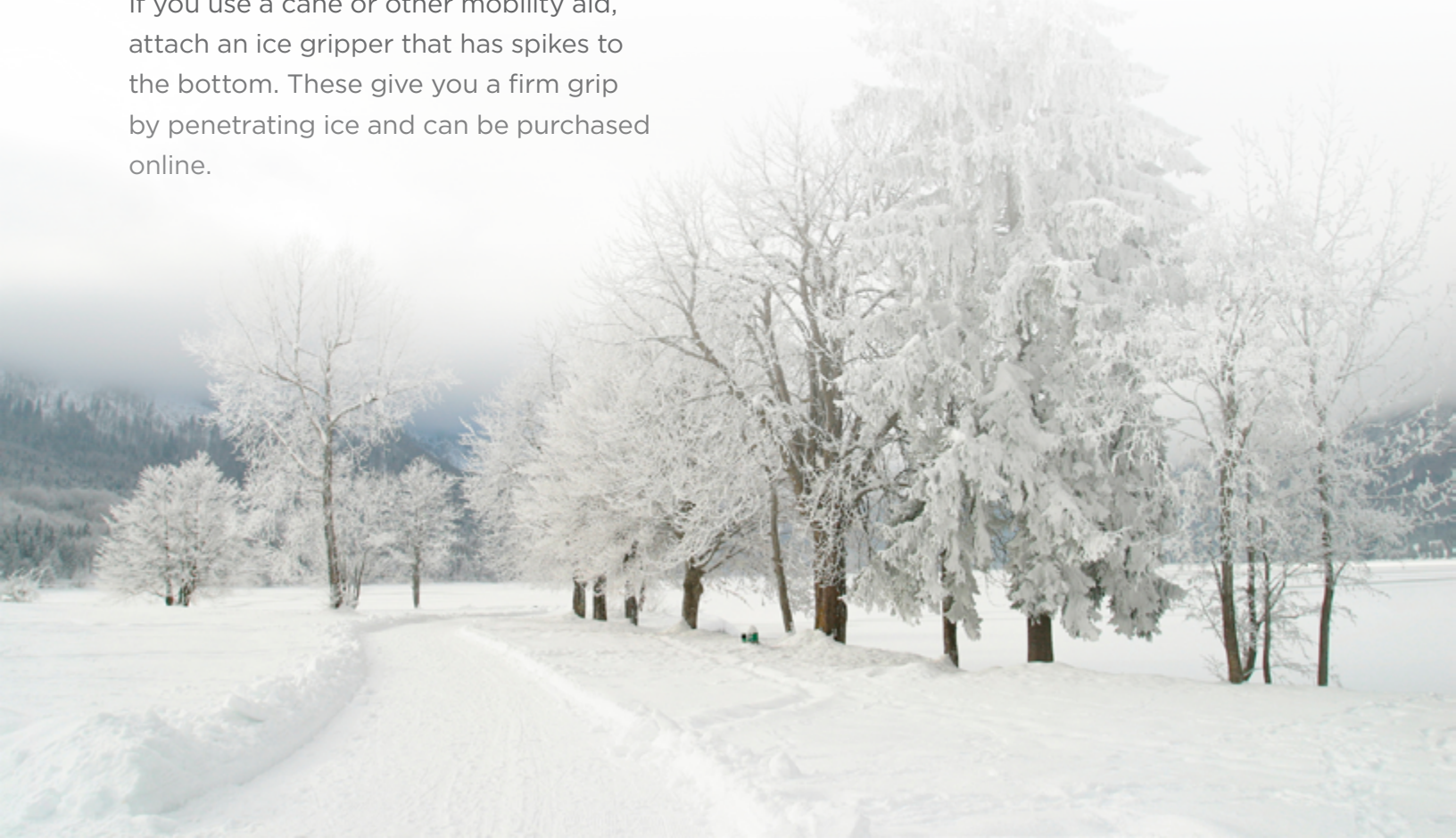
Carry a small bag of kitty litter to spread on ice if you encounter an unexpected icy patch.

HYPOTHERMIA AND FROSTBITE

Warning signs of hypothermia include cold, pale skin, confusion, sleepiness, weakness and slowed breathing. If you or someone you know may have hypothermia, call 911.

Avoid hypothermia by staying indoors and keeping your indoor temperature at least 65 degrees, staying dry and wearing two or three layers of clothing.

If you're outdoors and your skin starts to become painful and turn dark, go inside immediately. You could be experiencing frostbite. Cover up all exposed skin before going out and if you do experience frostbite, run the area under warm — not hot — water.



CHECKLIST

8 Ways to Prevent Falls in Your Home

- ☐ Arrange your furniture so you have a clear walking path in every room
- ☐ Do not store books, magazines or other items near walkways
- ☐ Make sure there's adequate lighting near your bed. This can be a lamp, flashlight or nightlight
- ☐ Use a nightlight along the path from your bedroom to the bathroom
- ☐ Make sure electrical cords are not in the walkways. Don't put them under a throw rug
- ☐ Make sure those throw rugs are secured with tacks, slip-resistant backing or double-sided tape
- ☐ In the kitchen, put your dishes and other cooking utensils within easy reach so you don't need to use a stool
- ☐ If you have loose carpeting or floor boards, repair them as soon as possible
- ☐ Use a slip-resistant rug and grab bars in your bathtub

For more in-depth ideas, [download our falls prevention checklist.](#)



Assess your fall risk

[With this online assessment tool](#)
from the Ohio Department
of Aging.



What to Do if You Fall

If you do fall, remember to try to remain calm. Before you move, assess whether you've been injured. If you have not been injured, try to do the following:

1. Look for a chair or other piece of stable furniture nearby
2. Roll onto your side and rest to let your blood pressure adjust before getting up
3. Slowly push your upper body off the ground, pausing to rest again
4. Get up onto your hands and knees and crawl to the stable piece of furniture
5. Once you've reached the furniture, put your hands on it and move one foot forward while your other knee remains bent on the floor
6. Slowly rise. If the piece of furniture you're using is a chair, take a seat and remain sitting for a while.
7. Call for help. Even if you feel fine, let someone know you've fallen. You may have an unnoticed injury.

Everyday Things to Prevent Falls

Add these things to your everyday routine to help prevent falls:

- Do simple exercise — swimming, walking, aerobics — at least 15 minutes per day. An exercise routine helps prevent falls by building muscle strength and improving balance
- Do a balance program like tai chi
- Get a fall risk assessment from your healthcare provider
- Go over your medications and note any that cause dizziness or drowsiness; if you're concerned, talk to your doctor about adjusting your medications
- Get your vision and hearing checked regularly
- Concentrate on tasks while you're performing them
- Drink six to eight glasses of water to help prevent dehydration and regulate blood pressure and fatigue
- Eat a well-balanced diet

You have the power to protect yourself from falls.

Be mindful of your health and medications,
get regular exercise, ensure your home
environment is safe and discuss any concerns
with your doctor — doing so can maintain your
independence and your health.

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Maintain your independence and
your family's peace of mind. See how.

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