

HOME SAFE HOME



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CENTERS FOR MEDICARE & MEDICAID SERVICES



Mountain-Pacific
Quality Health

My Personal Plan

**I will do the following to
reduce my fall risk**

Know the side effects of my medications

Get a yearly eye exam

Get regular exercise

Use good lighting

Assess my home for fall hazards

Wear non-slip shoes

Tell my doctor if I fall

My GOAL is:

Possible barriers to meeting my goal:

Things that would help me meet my goal:

My confidence in meeting my goal:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

not confident

very confident

DID YOU KNOW . . .

- If you are 65 or older, you have a one-in-three chance of falling this year. In fact, falls are the sixth leading cause of death from injury in people 65 and older and the risk for falling increases with age.
- Some falls do little more than cause bumps and bruises. Others can severely impact your quality of life by causing significant trauma that can be fatal or leave you disabled and dependent on others for your care.
- Falls don't just happen. There's usually an underlying cause, and while you may not be able to change some factors like growing older, many falls can be prevented.
- If you fall once, you're at an increased risk of falling again. *And* many people who do fall, even if they aren't injured, develop a fear of falling. Fear of falling can cause people to limit their physical activity, which leads to reduced mobility. Reduced mobility and lack of physical fitness, in turn, increases their risk of falling.
- If you do fall, even if you aren't injured, notify your health care provider. A fall could be a sign that you might have a new medical condition that needs attention, such as an infection or a cardiovascular problem.

The pages that follow contain tips on what you can do, starting today, to reduce your fall risk.

Fool-Proof Tips for Fall-Proofing Your Home

First, let's look at your home; are there hazards lurking inside that are just waiting to trip you up?

An important step toward preventing falls is to remove anything that could cause you to trip and fall. Take a look around and use the following list to help you identify hazards in your home. If you are unable to do this yourself, recruit a friend, neighbor or family member to help.

- **Floors and Walkways** - Are they clear of papers, shoes and cords? What about pet toys and pet dishes? Pets can also get underfoot, so watch out for them too!

Do you have to walk around furniture to get from one area to another? How are your rugs? Do they stick to the floor or are they non-slip? Look at the edges; do they curl up, posing a trip hazard? What about outdoor walkways? In the winter they could pose a fall hazard so remember to spread salt or sand on icy areas.

- **Stairs** - Are there handrails on each side of the stairway? Are the stairs free of clutter? If your stairwell is carpeted is the carpet torn? Are the stairs well-lit? Think about using non-slip strips on your stairs. They come in reflective colors, which might make it easier to see the edge of each stair.

Fool-Proof Tips for Fall-Proofing Your Home, cont.

- ☐ **Lighting** - Are light switches close by and easy to reach? Is the lighting inside and out bright enough? Always use the highest wattage recommended for the fixture. Keep a light by your bed. Make sure it's within easy reach. Use night lights where ever you could use extra light. A bathroom is a great place for a night light as is the hallway leading to it. A flashlight can be a lifesaver in a power outage.

- ☐ **Bathroom** - Do you use a non-slip mat in the tub or shower and on bathroom floor? What about handrails and grab bars? They can prevent falls if they're installed in the shower and around the tub and toilet areas. Also, make sure to wear foot ware with good traction and mop up spills right away.

- ☐ **Move regularly used items within easy reach** - Place items you rarely use in the back and store everyday items like food, dishes, linen and clothing in front for easy access.

SAFETY FIRST
TAKE TIME TO FALL PROOF YOUR HOME



My home safety checklist -

Use this list to identify areas in your home that may pose a fall risk. Ask a friend or family member to help you take the action you need to make your home a fall-free zone.

Floors/Walkways/Stairwells	Yes	No
Are rugs, walkways and stairwells clutter free, clear of papers, cords, pet toys, etc.?		
Does carpeting have holes/tears?		
Do area rugs curl up at the edges?		
Do area rugs stick to the floor?		
Do you have to walk around furniture to get from one area to the other?		
Are outdoor walkways free of clutter, i.e., hoses, papers?		
Are outdoor walkways ice-free?		
Are stairwells well lit?		
Do stairwells have hand rails?		
Lighting		
Is your lighting bright enough?		
Are light switches easy to reach?		
Do you have night lights placed in areas needing more light?		
Bathroom		
Are there non-slip place mats in and around the shower and tub areas?		
Do you have handrails installed in areas that pose a fall risk (shower/tub and toilet)?		

Now that your home is safer, it's time to look at other risks that can lead to a fall.

Just as there are external risk factors that can cause falls, there are those linked to a person's physical condition and include:

- ❑ **Medications** - Know what medications you take *and* their side effects.



As you age, medications work differently in your body and can make you feel dizzy or drowsy. These side effects can lead to a fall. Also, the more medications you take (four or more a day), the more likely you

are to fall. Don't stop any medication without first talking to your health care provider.

Your pharmacist can help you understand your medications, their side effects and if there are any that may interact with another. Just bring your prescribed and over-the-counter medications to your pharmacy for recommendations.



- ❑ **Muscle weakness** - People with weak muscles are more likely to fall. For this reason, it's important to maintain muscle strength; especially in your arms and legs. Flexibility and strength also go a long way to reducing your fall risk.

- ❑ **Balance & walking & reflexes**

People with problems walking or who have poor balance are also at risk for falling. These problems could be due to lack of exercise, arthritis, or other medical causes and their treatments.



Also as you age your reflexes become slower. The increase in the amount of time it takes to react may make it harder to regain your balance if you start to fall.

Problems with your feet that cause pain or ill-fitting foot ware like backless shoes or slippers, high heels or shoes and slippers with slippery soles can cause falls.

☐ Blood pressure

A big drop in blood pressure sometimes happens when



people stand up too quickly from a lying or sitting position. This drop in pressure can cause dizziness which can lead to a fall. Drop in blood pressure as described here can be linked to an infection,

medication or other medical condition such as diabetes.

Contact your doctor if this becomes a problem.

☐ Vision

See your eye doctor regularly because vision problems



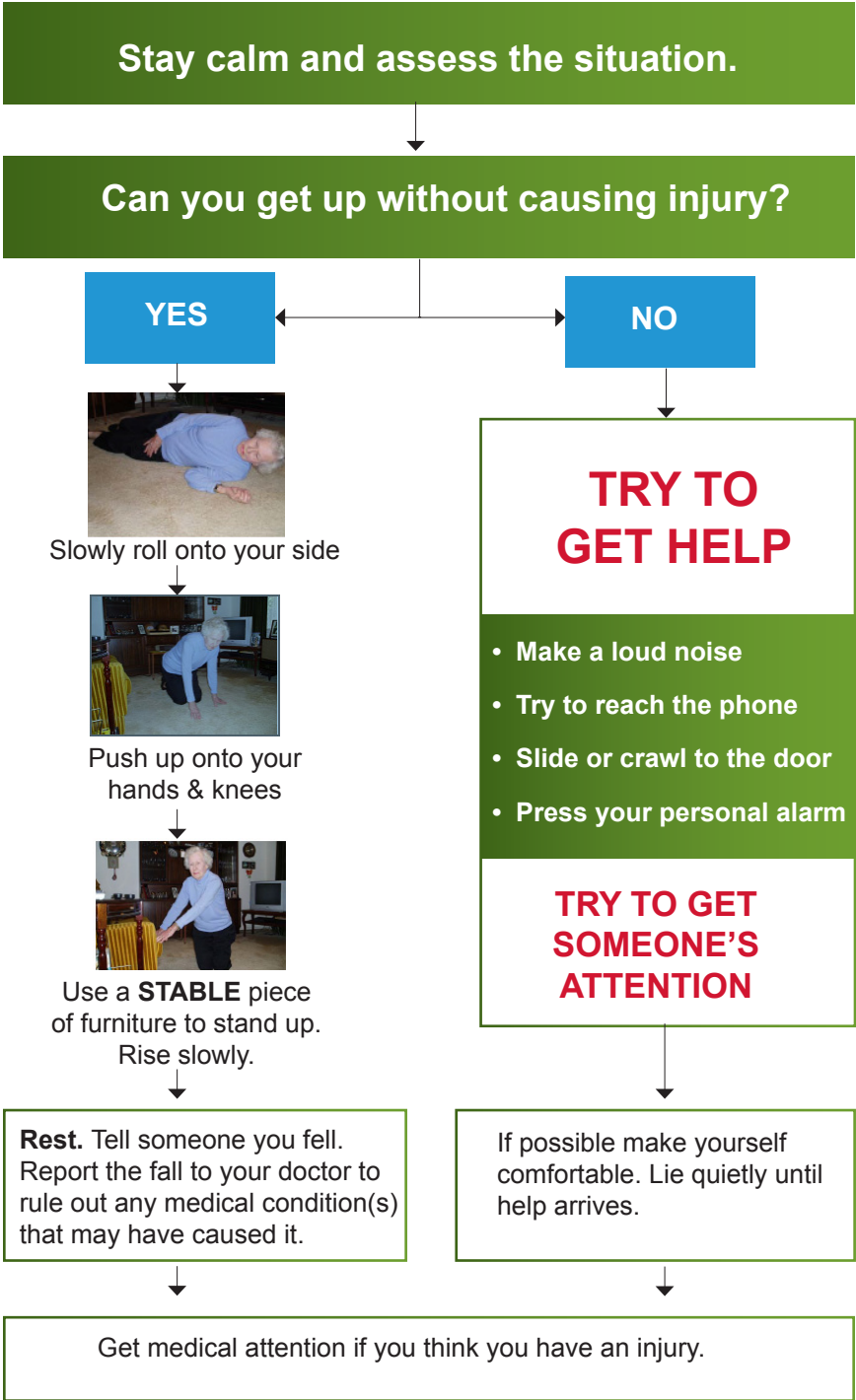
can put you at risk for falling. Poor vision, limited depth perception, glaucoma and cataracts can all lead to a fall. Even wearing bifocals can make surfaces appear uneven and can increase your fall risk so be extra cautious when climbing

stairs or stepping off curbs.

Falls can also happen when going between light and darkness. Let your eyes adjust to the change in light before going from one setting to the other.

IMPORTANT: Make sure to let your health care provider know if you fall. A fall could be the sign of a new medical problem or the worsening of another. **Remember, you can take action to prevent falls. Talk to your health care provider to discuss changes you can make now to keep you safe from falls in the future.**

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO IF YOU FALL AT HOME



This information is brought to you by Mountain-Pacific Quality Health, the Medicare quality improvement organization (QIO) for Montana, Wyoming, Hawaii and Alaska.

Mountain-Pacific is part of a nationwide network of QIOs and works locally, within the states and territories we serve, to achieve wide-scale improvements in patient care.

As a result of our quality improvement work with local health care providers, we strive to contribute to safer, more effective care for you.



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