

National Child Safety Council

senior safe[®]

Avoiding Falls

**Indoors
and
Outdoors**



Presented by

**National Child
Safety Council**

and your local

**Law Enforcement
Department**



Avoiding Falls



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Mature Americans represent the fastest growing segment of our society today.

In the near future, almost half of this country's population will be over fifty.

Falls are the #1 cause of accidental death in persons over 55.

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The majority of accidental falls are not job-related or involve situations of extreme danger.

They occur in homes during everyday activities.

1 out of 3 people aged 65 and older fall each year. Of those who fall, only half are able to return home to live independently.

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Look for ways to reduce potentially hazardous situations.

There are simple steps you can take to keep yourself safe.

Half of all falls could have been prevented.

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Physical Change

As we age, our bodies change.

This physical change is common, but as a result our bodies may become unsteady from physical conditions, medicines, illnesses, and/or low blood sugar.

Nearly 2 million senior citizens are taken to hospitals for fall injury treatment.

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Physical Change

To help avoid mishaps consider the following points:

- Always take prescription drugs according to the instructions.
- Realize that medicines such as antihistamines, sleeping pills, and tranquilizers can cause dizziness.
- Have regular eye check-ups. Impaired sight can lead to unsteady walking.

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Physical Change

- **Monitor blood pressure. Report any dizziness to your doctor immediately.**
- **Get up slowly after eating, resting, or lying down to avoid falls.**
- **Exercise to build strength and muscle tone and to keep joints, tendons, and ligaments more flexible.**

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Impaired Mobility

If you are having difficulty walking or moving around, consult a physician for an evaluation to determine the cause and possible treatment.

Physical therapists and **rehabilitation centers** (*Sports Medicine Centers*) are trained to help people of all ages with different impairments, to regain mobility that has been compromised by illness, accident, injury, or simply the aging process.

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Floors and Stairs

- **Install at least one long handrail on a staircase. Make sure it has a comfortable grip. Tighten any loose fixtures.**
- **Secure carpet or stair runners that are not fastened down.**
- **Wear well-fitted shoes or slippers with non-slip soles.**

Each year, over 7,000 senior citizens die as a result of falls.

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Floors and Stairs

- **Paint steps with a rough textured paint or use non-slip strips.**
- **Avoid deep pile, dark-colored, or patterned carpeting that can make it difficult to see the step's edges clearly.**
- **Avoid sharp changes in flooring levels such as from high carpet to low vinyl.**

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Bathroom Tips

- 1. Install a grip bar by the tub, shower stall, and above the sink and toilet.**
- 2. Set water heater below 120°F. A burn can startle the victim and cause a fall.**
- 3. Apply textured vinyl safety strips to the tub, shower, or tile floors, and use nonslip mats.**
- 4. Avoid scatter rugs!**
- 5. Tack down or tape cut-to-fit carpet or rubber backed rugs.**

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Bathroom Tips

- 6. Use a long-handled scrubber for better balance when bending over.**
- 7. Use nonslip bath and shower chairs.**
- 8. Watch out for slick soap or water spills.**
- 9. Never brace yourself on towel bars.**
- 10. Have a cordless telephone nearby for emergencies.**

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Protect Yourself

- ✓ **Use the highest allowable wattage bulbs in all light fixtures and lamps.**
- ✓ **Never walk into a dark room; all rooms should have a light switch or lamp by the door.**
- ✓ **Install night lights that lead from the bedroom to the bathroom.**
- ✓ **Have light switches at each end of stairs.**

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Protect Yourself

- ✓ **Be able to reach a light switch or lamp from bed or a favorite chair. Have a flashlight nearby.**
- ✓ **Secure scatter rugs with double-sided tape or tacks, especially in the kitchen and bath.**
- ✓ **Run electrical cords against walls, never under rugs or across doorways.**
- ✓ **Only carry what you can safely handle.**

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Protect Yourself

- ✓ In bedrooms, eliminate scattered clothing, shoes, and blankets or untucked sheets.
- ✓ Wipe up spills right away. Use detergent to cut greasy residue.
- ✓ Use a sturdy step stool with handrails to reach high cabinets. Long tongs help reach high items.
- ✓ Keep walkways clear of toys, magazines, newspapers, and yard & garden equipment.

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Protect Yourself

- ✓ **Do not rearrange furniture; it will keep familiar patterns in place.**
- ✓ **Always wear your glasses.**
- ✓ **Use a cane with a rubber tip if balance is a problem.**
- ✓ **Avoid going out after a snow or ice storm. If you must, wear high-traction shoes.**

Accidental falls are the leading cause of injuries.

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A safe fall?

The safest falls are those in which you:

- Allow your body to go limp.
- Try to land on your side or buttocks.
- Roll to a natural stop.

In this way, your body avoids large jolts of movement and receives fewer injuries.

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A safe fall?

When you try to get up from a fall:

- **Roll over naturally.**
- **Turn your head in the direction that you rolled.**
- **Try to get up on your knees.**

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In case of a fall!

During a fall your muscles will naturally tense up.

- 1. Stay calm. Never get up too quickly.**
- 2. Try to determine if you are hurt.**
- 3. If you think you are hurt, DO NOT try to get up.**
 - Call out for help.
 - Use your emergency beeper, let someone help, or dial 9-1-1.

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In case of a fall!

4. If you can, crawl to a stable piece of furniture such as a chair.

- Put both hands on the seat.
- Slowly pull yourself up, using the strength of your strongest knee. Keep the other knee on the floor for stability.
- Slowly turn around to sit in the chair.

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Indoors and Outdoors



National Child Safety Council has developed senior safe[®] materials geared specifically to the needs of today's active Senior.

The senior safe[®] materials make it easy for law enforcement departments or other community groups to present vital information for daily living and safeguarding lives to a group of Seniors in any setting.

For a complete list of NCSC senior safe[®] materials and other programs, visit www.nationalchildsafetycouncil.org or call 1-800-327-5107.



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