

Fall Prevention for People With Disabilities and Older Adults



Falls are the leading cause of injury and accidental death in adults over the age of 65 years. New or unfamiliar surroundings, improper footwear, cumbersome furniture arrangements, and distractions all can cause a person to accidentally stumble and fall, causing a serious injury, even death.

However, implementing a few prevention practices at home can decrease a person's risk of an unnecessary fall.

What can a person do to prevent falling?

- **Do not** walk and talk at the same time. Concentrate on the task of walking and continue the conversation after you've reached a safe place.
- **Wear** appropriate footwear. When walking long distances or in unfamiliar areas, wear flat, nonslip shoes. Also wear shoes that fit well and are comfortable.
- **Arrange** furniture so that it creates plenty of room to walk freely. If you use a walking aid, ensure that doorways and hallways are large enough to get through with any devices you may use.
- **Install** railings in hallways and grab bars in the bathroom and shower to prevent slipping.
- **Be sure** you have adequate lighting throughout your house.
- **Install** nonslip strips or a rubber mat on the floor of the tub or shower.
- **Remove** throw rugs or secure them firmly to the floor.
- **Use** caution when carrying items while walking.
- **Use** a nightlight when getting out of bed at night.
- **Stay** active to maintain overall strength and endurance.
- **Know** your limitations. If there is a task you can not complete with ease, do not risk a fall by trying to complete it.

Need more information?

If you would like to consult an occupational therapist about making your home safer, practitioners are available through most hospitals, community clinics, and medical centers.

Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants are trained in helping both adults and children with a broad range of physical, developmental, and psychological conditions. Practitioners also help clients in wellness techniques that may prevent injury and disease. Contact your local health officials for more information.