

Fall Prevention Strategies for the Home

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Break the process down into steps. Work through all of these steps to help reduce the likelihood of a dangerous fall in the home.

Step 1: Home Modification

- **Reducing clutter**
 - Make sure that pathways are clear – avoid placing curios, vases or small pots on stairwells or in walkways
 - Remove any old rugs that have become dog-eared
 - Get help removing excess furniture so you have pathways that are wide enough for you to use a cane or walker if necessary.
 - Look for articles online to help you get started. Work through the suggestions that you find. Here's a link to get you started:
<http://www.lifehack.org/articles/lifestyle/how-to-declutter-your-life-and-reduce-stress.html>
 - Use this Fall Prevention Checklist from the CDC to help evaluate your home:
https://www.cdc.gov/steady/pdf/check_for_safety_brochure-a.pdf

Step 2: Proper Exercise and Attire

- **Proper footwear**
 - Get rid of old footwear once the soles wear smooth
 - Avoid loose-fitting slip on shoes
 - Make sure the laces on your shoes are in good condition and that you lace your shoes tightly
 - Wearing properly fitted and laced rubber soled shoes has been shown to substantially reduce the likelihood of falls in the home, when compared to going barefoot, or

wearing socks without shoes:

<https://europepmc.org/articles/PMC3250347>

- Go to a higher end shoe store, where you can get your shoes properly fitted rather than just grabbing items off the shelf at one of the “Mart” stores.

- **Balance aids**

- Don't let pride leave you home-bound: many seniors reduce their own mobility by refusing to use a cane or walker, or to allow a relative to push them in a wheelchair when out in public – Geriatricians recommend that you maintain your mobility by any means necessary: it's better to use a cane or walker, or even allow a relative to push you in a wheelchair through the mall or museum than it is to stay home by yourself.

- Rollator walkers can now be purchased at a variety of retail stores, and price points start below \$100. Make sure that if you purchase one of these units that you adjust the handles to the correct height, so that when you're walking with the unit your arms are nearly straight, but that you aren't walking with your arms completely straight and your elbows locked. Ask your doctor for a recommendation regarding make and model.



- The following article from the Mayo Clinic is intended to help seniors pick out the ideal walker for their uses:

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/healthy-aging/multimedia/walker/sls-20076469>

- **Balance, flexibility and strength training**

- One of the key determinants of senior health that I look at is the ability to clip your own toenails and tie your own shoes – if you aren't able to reach your own feet, you

should talk to your physician about an exercise program to help restore your strength and flexibility, and may even want to see a physical therapist who can help you to restore your flexibility and reach.

- Libraries and senior organizations often host yoga and tai-chi classes that are great for helping to maintain or restore strength and flexibility. The Baldwinsville Library offers these classes on Saturday mornings. Go to the library website at <http://bville.lib.ny.us> and click on *Programs & Collections > Library Calendar >* and the *signmeup* icon on the day of the class to sign up.

The Signmeup icon on the library calendar looks like this:



Diet

- **Regular mealtimes and sufficient caloric intake**
 - Maintaining regular mealtimes is especially important for those who are hypoglycemic, or prediabetic. Skipping meals can result in loss of energy and lightheadedness, which increases the chances of a fall.
 - The National Council on Aging offers Health Eating tips for seniors:
<https://www.ncoa.org/economic-security/benefits/food-and-nutrition/senior-nutrition/>
- **Maintaining hydration to avoid dizziness from loss of blood volume**
 - If you feel dizzy for a few seconds when you stand up from a chair, it's often due to loss of blood volume due to dehydration, and a sign that you need fluids.
 - When you become dehydrated the volume of your blood is diminished and your blood becomes thicker. If you get up from a chair or kneeling position too quickly, you may experience a second or two of dizziness while your body works to restore normal blood volume and pressure to the head and upper extremities.
 - Hydrate with water or juice, and avoid diuretics like coffee, soda or beer.

Medications

- Ask your physician and pharmacist about side effects of medications when they are prescribed to you.
- Be aware of the side effects of your medications.
 - You can research the side effects of medications on MedlinePlus or MayoClinic.org.
 - <https://medlineplus.gov/medicines.html>
 - <https://www.mayoclinic.org/drugs-supplements>

Allergies, Coughing and Sneezing

- Brace yourself or sit down during sneezing or coughing fits.
 - Pressure on the vagus nerve caused by coughing or sneezing is a common cause of dizzy spells for seniors with allergies
 - A coughing or sneezing fit may cause temporary pressure on the vagus nerve, resulting in a brief period of dizziness; this condition, known as Vasovagal Syncope is common in seniors, and may be intensified in individuals suffering from chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder (COPD), who have heart conditions, or who are taking blood thinners
 - If you're taking allergy medication, be sure to take it regularly, to help reduce the likelihood of intense coughing or sneezing fits.
 - Many older Americans are allergic to mold spores. Exposure to mold can be a cause of intense sneezing and coughing fits, and a cause of other cardiovascular complications
- <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-10/documents/moldguide12.pdf>



