



The AGS Foundation for  
Health in Aging's

# Preventing Serious Falls: Tips for Older Adults and Their Loved Ones

## Falls are a leading cause of serious injuries in older adults.

Every year, about a third of older Americans fall. Injuries from falls can lead to hospitalization, nursing home admission, and even death among older people.

The chance of falling increases as we get older. Health problems such as arthritis, heart disease, muscle weakness, poor balance or vision, foot problems, Parkinson's disease, dementia and even certain medications can increase your chance of falling. Dangerous things around the home—slippery throw rugs, and poor lighting, for example—make falls more likely as well. The American Geriatrics Society recommends that older adults get a “falls check up” on a regular basis. If you're an older adult, the American Geriatrics Society's Foundation for Health in Aging (FHA) recommends the following to lower your risk of falling. If you have an older loved one, the FHA suggests you help him or her follow the steps below.

**Tell your doctor or healthcare provider if you have had a fall** If you fall, let your doctor or healthcare provider know right away. It is important for you to tell him or her what might have caused the fall—whether you tripped over something, for instance, or got dizzy and lost your balance, or felt your legs “go out” from under you. This is all important information that will be used to help you avoid falling again.

**Review your medications with your healthcare provider** Put all of your medications—prescription drugs, over-the-counter medications, vitamins or any other pills that you take in a bag and bring them with you to your next visit. Your doctor or nurse can review your medications to see if any might increase your chance of falling. If so, he or she may change the dose, or prescribe another type of medicine for you.

## **Work with your doctor or healthcare provider to identify and treat health problems that**

**can cause falls** During your visit, your doctor or healthcare provider may also check your balance, leg strength and function, your blood pressure, heart rate and rhythm; examine the way you walk; and test your vision. Based on what your provider finds he or she may recommend certain exercises, physical therapy, balance training, a cane or walker, a change in the kind of shoes you wear or in your eyeglasses prescription, or prescribe new medication to lower your risk of falls.

## **Get rid of dangers at home:**

- Remove loose carpets and rugs or tack down the carpets and substitute rugs with nonskid backing
- Add lights in dimly lit areas and at the top and bottom of stairs
- Use nightlights in bedrooms, halls and bathrooms
- Clean up clutter—especially near staircases
- Put hand rails on both sides of any steps or stairs in your home.
- Add “grab bars” near the toilet and bath tub, and no slip decals or a rubber mat in the tub or shower
- Wear firm shoes that are not slippery on the bottom. Don’t walk around in loose slippers or socks.



## **Foundation for Health in Aging**

**Established by the American Geriatrics Society**

350 Fifth Avenue  
Suite 801  
New York, NY 10118  
212-755-6810  
[www.healthinaging.org](http://www.healthinaging.org)

The Foundation for Health in Aging builds a bridge between the research and practice of geriatrics health care professionals and the public. The Foundation advocates on behalf of older adults and their special needs through public education, clinical research, and public policy.

The American Geriatrics Society is dedicated to improving the health and well-being of older adults. With a membership of over 6,000 health care professionals, the AGS has a long history of improving the health care of older adults.