

What To Do If You Do Fall

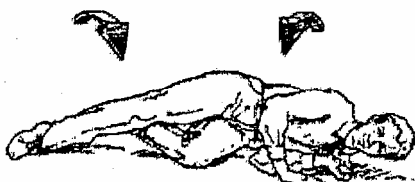
by John Robertson May 2007

Whether you are at home or somewhere else, a sudden fall can be startling and upsetting. If you do fall, stay as calm as possible. Take several deep breaths to try to relax.

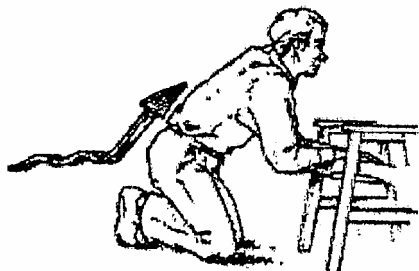
Remain still on the floor or ground for a few moments. This will help you get over the shock of falling. It will also give you time to decide if you're hurt before getting up.

Getting up too quickly or in the wrong way could make an injury worse.

If you think you can get up safely without help, roll over onto your side.

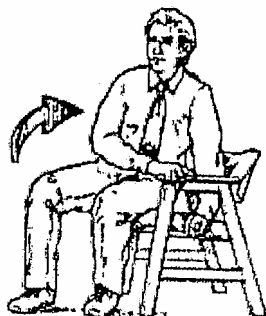


Push yourself up into a seated position. Rest again while your body and blood pressure adjust. Slowly get up on your hands and knees, and crawl to a sturdy chair.



Put your hands on the chair seat and slide one foot forward so that it is flat on the floor.

Keep the other leg bent so the knee is on the floor.



From this kneeling position, slowly rise and turn your body to sit in the chair.

If you're hurt or can't get up on your own, ask someone for help or call 911. If you're alone, try to get into a comfortable position and wait for help to arrive.

If you have problems with balance or dizziness and are often alone, consider getting a personal emergency response system. This service, which works through your telephone line, provides a button or bracelet to wear at all times in your home. If you fall or need emergency assistance for any reason, a push of the button will alert the service. Emergency medical services will be called. There is a fee for medical monitoring services, but your personal safety may be worth the cost.

Carrying a portable phone with you as you move about your house could make it easier to call someone if you need assistance. You might also put a telephone in a place that you can reach from the floor in case you fall and need help.

Be sure to discuss any fall with your doctor. Write down when, where, and how you fell so you can discuss the details with your doctor. The doctor can assess whether a medical issue or other cause of the fall needs to be addressed. Knowing the cause can help you plan to prevent future falls.

Many older people who have fallen are afraid of falling again. Even if a fall doesn't cause injury, the fear of falling again might prevent you from doing activities you enjoy or need to do.

Fear of falling also might cause you to stay at home away from your friends, family, and others.

Your muscles and bones can weaken over time without the physical activity that comes with doing daily tasks or exercise. As a result, you could become more -- not less -- likely to fall.

After a fall, your doctor might refer you to other health care providers who can help prevent future falls. A physical therapist can help with gait, balance, strength training, and walking aids.

An occupational therapist can suggest changes in your home that may lower your risk of falls.

If you're at high risk for falls and hip fractures, your doctor might suggest that you wear a padded "hip protector." A hip protector is worn over the hips under clothing. It absorbs some of the force of a fall and lessens the impact of the fall on the bones.