

# INDEPENDENCE

WHY RISK IT?

YOUR GUIDE TO LIVING INDEPENDENTLY AT HOME

## ARE YOU AT RISK?

- (2) I have fallen in the last six months.
- (2) I use or have been advised to use a cane or walker.
- (1) Sometimes, I feel unsteady when I am walking.
- (1) I steady myself by holding onto furniture when walking at home.
- (1) I am worried about falling.
- (1) I need to push with my hands to stand up from a chair.
- (1) I have some trouble stepping up onto a curb.
- (1) I often have to rush to the toilet.
- (1) I have lost some feeling in my feet.
- (1) I take medicine that sometime makes me feel light-headed or more tired than usual.
- (1) I take medicine to help me sleep or improve my mood.
- (1) I often feel sad or depressed.

**Total Points:** \_\_\_\_\_

Add up the number of points in parentheses for each statement that applies to you. If you scored **4 points or more**, you may be **at risk** for falling.

For more information, please visit:

[www.seniorsbc.ca/stayingindependent](http://www.seniorsbc.ca/stayingindependent)



STAYING INDEPENDENT

## DID YOU KNOW?

- One-third of seniors suffer one or more falls every year.
- Falls are the most common cause of injury and the 6<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death for seniors.
- Almost half of admissions to long-term care facilities are fall-related.
- Half of the people who have a hip fracture never regain their pre-fall level of functioning.
- Most falls occur at home during usual daily activities.
- 40% of falls of falls that require hospitalization involve hip fractures.
- Women are 3 times more likely than men to be hospitalized for a fall.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO PREVENT FALLS

### 1) Begin a regular exercise program

- Do exercises that improve balance and coordination such as Tai Chi or *Get Up & Go!*
- Exercise will make you stronger and help you feel better
- Lack of exercise leads to weakness

### 2) Have your health care provider review your medicines

- As you get older, the way medicines work in your body can change
- Some medicines, or combinations of medicines, can make you sleepy or dizzy and can cause you to fall

### 3) Have your vision checked

- Have your eyes checked at least once a year
- You may be wearing the wrong glasses or have a condition like glaucoma or cataracts that limits your vision

### 4) Make your home safer

- Remove small throw rugs or use double sided tape to keep rugs from slipping
- Keep items you use often in cabinets you can reach easily without using a step stool
- Wear shoes both inside and outside the house. Avoid going barefoot, in socks, or wearing slippers.
- Improve the lighting in your home

*Try the Home Safety Checklist on the next page!*

**“Being physically active is one of the most important ways to lower your chances of falling!”**



TRY TAI CHI



REVIEW YOUR MEDS

## COMPLETE THIS HOME SAFETY CHECKLIST TO ENSURE THAT YOUR HOME IS FREE OF FALLS!

### STAIRS AND STEPS

- Have light switches at the top and bottom of the stairs. Make sure the stairs are well lit.
- Ensure that your stairs are in good repair with a non-skid surface and free of clutter.
- Mark the edges of the steps with contrasting coloured non-skid tape or paint.
- Ensure that there are sturdy handrails on at least one side of all stairways.
- Remove your reading glasses when you go up and down the stairs.
- Never rush up or down the stairs.

### KITCHEN

- Place frequently used items in easy-to-reach locations. Heavier items should be stored in lower cupboards.
- Use a broad based, sturdy and secure stepladder if it is absolutely necessary to reach high places.
- Avoid use of floor wax, or use the non-skid kind.
- Always wipe up any spills immediately to avoid slipping.

### LIVING AREAS

- Make sure all walking areas are clear of telephone or other electrical cords.
- Position your furniture accordingly to keep pathways clear to and from areas that you need access to.
- Have a cordless telephone within easy reach.

### BEDROOM

- Have a light within reach of your bed. Consider a flash light or a lamp with a "clap-on" adaptor.
- Beds should be at a good height for easy movement on and off. Firmer mattresses will make getting in and out easier.
- Have a cordless phone by your bed.
- Make sure there is a clear path from your bed to the bathroom.
- Ensure your bedspread is clear of the floor and is not a tripping hazard.
- Have your walking aid handy and within easy reach of the bed in case you have to get up in the night.
- Sit on the edge of your bed for a minute before getting up after a rest.

### BATHROOM

- Use slip-resistant mats around the shower and bath. Paint-on or self-adhesive slip-resistant strips are advisable in the shower and bath.
- Soap, shampoo, and towels should be placed within easy reach so that you don't have to bend or reach for them.
- Have grab bars installed around the bath, shower, and toilet.
- If you have trouble getting on and off the toilet seat, consider using an elevated toilet seat adaptor.
- Consider using a bath seat so you can take a shower or bath sitting down.



1. It is important to **remain calm** after the fall. Lie still for a few minutes and assess the situation. Only try to get up if you believe you can do so **safely**.

2. Start by **slowly** pushing yourself up onto your elbows. Lift your head and **remain still** for a moment to let your blood pressure adjust.



3. **Slowly** get up onto your hands and knees. **Look** around for a **stable** piece of furniture such as a chair and move towards it.

4. Place your hands on a **steady** surface of the chair and **rest**. Move **one foot** forward and place it flat on the floor. One knee should still be on the ground.



5. With the chair as support, **slowly** rise into a standing position. Keep your hands on the chair and take **rest** to allow your blood pressure to adjust.

6. Turn your body and **gently** lower yourself into the seat. Stay seated for a few minutes and assess how you feel. **Call for help** if you need it. Let someone know what happened even if you feel okay. You may not be aware of any **injuries**.

