



One in 3 Canadians  
aged 65 and over fall at least  
once a year. Many of these falls  
result in serious injury and loss  
of mobility and independence.  
**Most falls can be prevented.**

# TAKE ACTION... to prevent falls

  
**Staying  
On Your Feet**  
*Taking Steps to Prevent Falls*

La version française du livret est disponible de [www.preventfalls.ca](http://www.preventfalls.ca)

## Preventing falls is an important part of healthy aging.

Healthy aging is not just about avoiding illness and injury; it's about being able to enjoy our lives to the fullest. This involves maintaining a healthy lifestyle keeping physically and mentally active and being involved in a social network.

A fall can happen to anyone at anytime, but by being aware of risk factors and taking action to address your risk factors, you can prevent falls.

Share this information with family, neighbours and friends that might also be at risk of falling.



# Yes, you can reduce your risk of falling.

We all want to stay mobile and independent as we grow older. A fall can have a negative impact on a person's condition and lifestyle. In fact for older people, falling is the leading cause of injury hospitalization and admission to personal care homes. The good news is that we can prevent most falls by taking the simple and effective steps that are described in this booklet.

The first step in preventing a fall is to know what puts you at higher risk of falling. Reasons for falling could be about you (such as a change in your balance), about your surroundings (such as a slippery floor or cracked sidewalk) or about a combination of many factors (such as wearing unsafe footwear on a slippery sidewalk). This booklet will help you identify the changes you can make to lower your chances of having a fall.

## Who is this booklet for?

This book is intended to help older adults, people with mobility problems and their families/ caregivers in preventing a fall. While it may be of most interest to those who have had a fall or have mobility problems, this book provides information that can help all older adults maintain their health and keep safe.

## How to use this booklet

This booklet provides information on actions that are effective for preventing a fall. Start by doing the Falls Prevention Checklist on the next page to help you identify the areas that you should focus on. Then, review all the sections, but focus on the factors that relate to you, your lifestyle, independence and environment. You can use the "Personal Action Plan" to identify what you need to do to prevent falls and plan how you are going to do it. We know that it can take a while to change behaviors so there is also an Exercise and Vitamin D log to help your record your new habits.

# A Checklist to Help You Prevent Falls



While anyone can have a fall, if you are 65 years of age or older you are at greater risk of falling. A fall can result in serious injuries that affect your mobility, independence and lifestyle.

- One in three Canadians age 65 years and over fall at least once per year
- Falling is **not** a normal part of aging
- Most falls can be prevented

The following checklist can help you identify the things that put you at risk of falling.

**Answer the questions below to help you stay on your feet and prevent falls.**

**Check if Yes**

**Have you had a fall in the last year?**

If you have previously fallen, your chance of falling again is higher. This makes it especially important that you take action to prevent falls. Completing this checklist is a good start.

**Do you have trouble with your balance, are you unsteady on your feet or do you have difficulty getting up from sitting?**

Do balance and strength exercises 15 minutes each day, such as Tai Chi, or a specific balance exercise program. Visit [www.preventfalls.ca](http://www.preventfalls.ca) for a series of home balance exercises or to find a balance exercise program in your community.

**Do you spend less than 30 minutes each day being physically active?**

Many falls are the result of weak muscles and/or poor balance. Stay strong and healthy by walking, swimming, cycling, exercising in a group or doing other activities that you enjoy.

**Do you take three or more medications a day?**

**Do you take medications for sleeping, blood pressure, mental health, or pain, or any medications that make you drowsy or light headed?**

Some side effects and combinations of medications can increase your risk of a fall. Have your medications, over-the-counter drugs and herbal supplements reviewed by your doctor, pharmacist or nurse once per year and whenever new medications are started.

**Do you take less than 1000 IU of vitamin D each day?**

**Do you eat less than three nutritious meals every day?**

For good health, take a 1000 IU vitamin D supplement each day and eat nutritious foods from all four food groups. Limit your alcohol intake.

**Do your shoes have high heels, slippery soles or fit poorly?**

**Do you wear slippers or socks or stockings without shoes?**

Proper footwear is a key to preventing falls. Wear shoes that fit well and provide good support outdoors and indoors. Do not wear just socks or slippers in your home.

---

**Have you had a stroke? Do you have arthritis, diabetes, Parkinson's Disease, or problems with your heart, blood pressure or bladder?**

Many health conditions can increase your risk of falling. If your health changes, see your doctor as soon as possible.

---

**Has it been more than two years since your eyes were tested or one year since your glasses were checked?**

Have your eyes checked every two years by your eye doctor and have your eyewear checked for fit each year. Your vision may have changed without you noticing.

---

**Do you do activities that put you at risk of falling such as climbing a ladder?**

**Are there hazards in your home that could cause you to fall such as scatter rugs, clutter on the floor or stairs, or poor lighting?**

Always give your full attention to what you are doing and ask for help with activities that could put you at risk of a fall. Assess your home with the **Staying On Your Feet Home Safety Checklist** on page 25 or for more detailed information, visit [www.preventfalls.ca](http://www.preventfalls.ca). A safe home can help you maintain an independent lifestyle.

---

## **If you answered "yes" to one or more of these questions you have identified your personal risk factors for falling.**

To find out how you can reduce your risk and stay on your feet, read the sections in this book that apply to your risk factors. Share this checklist with your family, close friends, or care providers so they can help support your efforts to prevent falls.

To learn more, visit [www.PreventFalls.ca](http://www.PreventFalls.ca)

# **Most falls are preventable!**

**Take action TODAY to prevent falls and maintain your mobility and independence.**



# Table of Contents

Falls Prevention Checklist.....	2
Improve Your Balance & Stay Active .....	7
Balance Exercises to do in Your Home.....	8
Exercise & Vitamin D Log.....	11
Manage Your Medications .....	13
Vitamin D & Eating Healthy .....	15
Foot Care & Safe Footwear.....	17
Manage Your Health Conditions .....	19
Take Care of Your Eyesight .....	21
Consider Safety Equipment .....	23
Identify, Remove and Report Hazards.....	25
What to do if you fall .....	28

For more information on falls prevention, visit

[www.preventfalls.ca](http://www.preventfalls.ca)





# Improve your Balance & Stay Active

When it comes to preventing falls, balance exercise is particularly important. In fact, up to 25% of falls among older people can be caused by poor balance or walking style. Exercise that improves balance can reduce falls by between 22-38%.

## Take Action!

**Balance exercises should be done for 15-20 minutes each day** (about two hours a week). Balance exercises should be done in addition to other activities you participate in.

Balance exercises can be done in your home. If you like to exercise in groups, there are some good balance exercise programs, including Tai Chi, in the community. To find a program in your area, visit [www.preventfalls.ca](http://www.preventfalls.ca).

**When you are starting new exercises, you should:**

### Start slowly.

Start with a few repetitions of one or two exercises at a time, and gradually increase how much are you doing. Once you can do the exercises easily and comfortably, you can start to increase the difficulty.

### Use support.

Rest your hands on a counter top or sturdy table for support. You can gradually decrease the amount of support through your hands by only using your finger tips or by hovering your hands over the support surface.

### Wear appropriate footwear.

Wear good fitting footwear with a non-slip sole and low broad heel. Running shoes are a good choice. Do not wear slippers or socks.

### Listen to your body.

Only do exercises you feel safe and comfortable doing. If any exercise causes you to feel increased pain or short of breath or so unsteady that you think you could fall, stop that exercise and talk to your doctor.

### Keep Track of Your Balance Exercise

Making good new habits can take a while. Use the Balance Exercise Log on page 11 to keep track of your exercises each day.



# Balance exercises to do in your home

These exercises can be done at the kitchen counter or table.



## Stand with one foot in front of the other (walk stance)

- Stand next to a sturdy table or counter for support.
- Place one foot in front of the other with a 10 cm (4 inch) gap between the toe of your back foot and heel of your front foot.
- Hold for 10 seconds and repeat with the other foot in front.

### For increased difficulty:

- 1 Use your hands less for support.
- 2 Place your back and front foot closer together.
- 3 Repeat it twice on each leg.
- 4 Slowly walk heel to toe alongside a table or counter.



## Lift your leg to the side

- Stand next to a sturdy table or counter for support.
- Keep your toes pointing forward, lift one leg out to the side and hold for 5 seconds.
- Slowly lower your leg back to the ground.
- Repeat with the other leg.
- Do this 8 times.

### For increased difficulty:

- 1 Use your hands less for support.
- 2 Slowly walk sideways alongside a table or bench, first to your left and then to your right.



## Raise up onto your toes

- Stand next to a sturdy table or counter for support.
- Raise onto your toes by lifting both heels off the ground, and hold for 5 seconds.
- Slowly lower your heels back to the ground.
- Do this 5 times.

### For increased difficulty:

- 1 Use your hands less for support.
- 2 Stand on your right leg and raise onto your toes. Repeat on your left leg.
- 3 Repeat it 10 times.

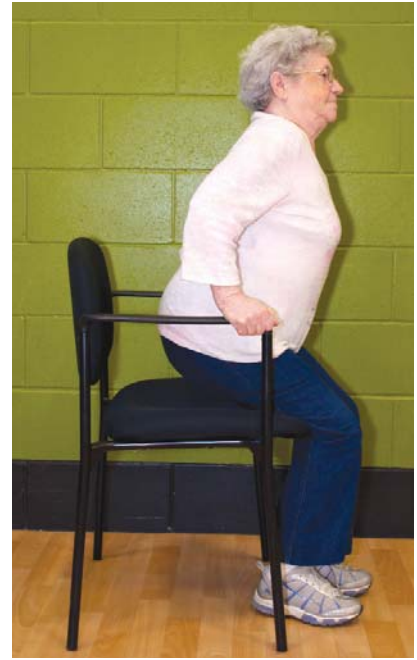


## Lift your knees

- Stand next to a sturdy table or counter for support.
- Lift your foot off the ground and hold it for 5 seconds.
- Repeat with the other foot.
- Do this 8 times on each leg.

### For increased difficulty:

- 1 Use your hands less for support.
- 2 Lift your knee to hip level.
- 3 Hold it for 10 seconds.



## Sit to stand from a chair

- Sit in a chair with arm rests.
- Scoot your bottom to the front edge of the chair and put your hands on the arm rests.
- Place your feet hip width apart.
- Lean forward and stand up slowly.
- Slowly lower yourself to sit back into the chair.
- Do this 5 times.

### For increased difficulty:

- 1 Use your hands less for support.
- 2 Repeat it 10 times.

# Stay Active

Everyone knows that physical activity is good for our long-term health and mobility. While any amount of activity is better than none, it is best to be physically active for 20 - 30 minutes every day.



Activities can include going for walks with family and friends, doing gardening or housework, dancing, washing the car, swimming or playing golf.

Regardless of your age, weight, health condition or disability, regular physical activity can improve:

- Balance, posture and coordination
- Bone strength and can slow osteoporosis
- Cardiovascular fitness (lungs & heart)
- Flexibility and mobility of joints
- Muscle strength
- Sleep
- Weight
- Quality of life
- Chronic health conditions
- Confidence and independence

## For more information:

- Visit [www.preventfalls.ca](http://www.preventfalls.ca) for a list of community exercise programs in your area
- Manitoba Physiotherapy Association  
[www.mbphysio.org](http://www.mbphysio.org)
- Active Living Coalition for Older Adults  
[www.alcoamb.org](http://www.alcoamb.org)
- Canada Fitness Guide for Older Adults  
[www.phac-aspc.gc.ca](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca)

# Vitamin D and Balance Exercise Log

To help prevent a fall, remember to take 1000 IU of vitamin D and do 15 minutes of balance exercises every day. You can use this log sheet to record your new Vitamin D and exercise habits.

Month _____	Vitamin D (1000 IU recommended) I take _____ IU	Minutes of Balance Exercise (15 minutes recommended)	Did you fall?
Date			
1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> yes
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> yes
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> yes
4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> yes
5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> yes
6	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> yes
7	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> yes
8	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> yes
9	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> yes
10	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> yes
11	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> yes
12	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> yes
13	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> yes
14	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> yes
15	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> yes
16	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> yes
17	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> yes
18	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> yes
19	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> yes
20	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> yes
21	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> yes
22	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> yes
23	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> yes
24	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> yes
25	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> yes
26	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> yes
27	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> yes
28	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> yes
29	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> yes
30	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> yes
31	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> yes



**A medication review should consider:**

- your medical or health conditions
- all medications including non-prescription medications, homeopathic remedies and natural health products
- why you are taking medications
- how and when you take your medications
- untreated or undertreated health conditions
- medications that could put you at risk of falling
- bone health including over the counter vitamin D and calcium
- use of blood thinners

# Manage Your Medications

Use of medication often increases with age. Many medications taken by older adults can contribute to a fall.

## You are at risk if:

- You take three or more medications, including over-the-counter medications, herbal supplements or homeopathic remedies
- There is an interaction between your medications
- Or if you take medications
  - for sleeping, mental health, blood pressure or pain
  - that cause dizziness, vision problems, drowsiness, low blood pressure, stiff muscles, or unsteadiness

**NOTE:** Blood thinners can increase your risk for bleeding or severe bruising if you fall.

## Take Action!

Have your medications reviewed by your doctor, pharmacist or nurse:

- Once a year
- When you start a new medication
- If you experience any symptoms that make you feel weak or unsteady, drowsy, dizzy, light-headed, or if you have difficulty thinking clearly or blurred or double vision
- Before taking over the counter medications

Take your medications as directed. It is important that you take the correct dose and at the proper time.

Know the names of your medications, the amount you take, what they look like, the possible side effects and if they are the best medication for you.

Ask your pharmacist about using a bubble pack or a dosette to organize your medications.

Limit the amount of alcohol you drink as it may interact with your medications.

Take out of date or unused medicines to your pharmacy for safe disposal.

Keep an updated list of all your current medications. This can be done by using the ERIK kit which is available from many of the Seniors Community Resource Councils. Keep this kit on your refrigerator so emergency workers can easily find it.

## For more information:

- Contact your pharmacist.
- To find the Seniors Resource Council in your area, call the Seniors Information Line at **204-945-6565** in Winnipeg or toll free at **1-800-665-6565**.
- Visit **[www.safetoask.ca](http://www.safetoask.ca)** for a medication card and for tips talking with your health care provider.





# Vitamin D & Healthy Eating

Eating a healthy and balanced diet helps you feel good, keeps your bones and muscles strong and can prevent long term health conditions. New studies show that getting enough vitamin D and calcium can help you avoid a fall and may prevent serious injury if you do fall.

## Vitamin D is important because it:

- Helps your body absorb calcium and phosphorus, two minerals needed for strong bones and teeth
- Protects against osteoporosis
- Keeps muscles stronger when you exercise

While our bodies make vitamin D when we are in the sun, as we grow older our ability to do this decreases. During the winter, the sun is weaker, making it harder to get vitamin D. Vitamin D is found in some foods and is added to others. It is very difficult to get enough from food alone.



## Take Action!

### Get enough Vitamin D

**Take a daily supplement of 1,000 IU (international units) vitamin D<sub>3</sub>.** You should **not** take more than 4,000 IUs/day.

Vitamin supplements come in several forms. You can talk to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist about the best type for you.

- **Multivitamins** may include some vitamin D. They often only have 400 IU so you will need to take an additional vitamin D supplement.
- **Liquid vitamin D** is easy to use and can be mixed into drinks.
- **Capsulated vitamin D** is easier to swallow as they are made out of a gel.
- **Gummy chews with vitamin D** are very easy to swallow and are recommended for people who can't take capsules or tablets. They come in a variety of flavours.
- **Vitamin D tablets** are the most common and least expensive form of vitamin D.

Use the Vitamin D log sheet on page 11 as a daily reminder and to keep a record of your new vitamin D habit.

## Plan Healthy Meals & Snacks

- Choose a variety of nutritious foods from all four food groups.
- Eat plenty of protein-rich foods every day. Some examples are meat, fish, dairy products, tofu or nuts.



## Stay Hydrated

- Drink at least nine glasses of fluid each day. This may include water, milk, or tea.
- Drink fluids with and between meals, as well as with medications.
- Limit alcohol to no more than one or two drinks a day.

### For more information:

- Dial-a-Dietitian at **1-877-830-2892**
- Public Health Dietitian in your region
- Osteoporosis Canada, Manitoba Chapter, phone **204-772-3498** or visit **[www.osteoporosis.ca](http://www.osteoporosis.ca)**



# Footcare & Safe Footwear

Taking care of your feet and wearing safe footwear are important ways to help prevent a fall. Foot problems can affect your balance and change the way you walk. Shoes with high heels, slippery soles or shoes that fit poorly can cause you to lose your balance and fall. If you combine unsafe footwear with foot problems, the risk of falling is even greater.

Taking care of your feet and wearing shoes that fit properly will help you be more steady on your feet and can actually prevent some common foot problems (such as corns, calluses, bunions, ingrown or thick toenails and ulcerations).

## Take Action!

### Look After Your Feet

- See a doctor, podiatrist or foot care nurse about foot problems and foot pain.
- Have your feet assessed, nails cut and corns treated.
- Do foot exercises, like foot circles, to maintain good circulation in your feet, ankles and legs.
- Try a foot massage or soak your feet and use a moisturizer.



## Wear safe footwear

- Choose shoes with laces or velcro, wide, flat heels and a non-slip sole.
- Wear good fitting, supportive footwear for stability at all times in your home. Do not wear slippers or socks as they can actually cause a fall.
- Ask a trained salesperson to help you choose a shoe that is appropriate for you. Some salespeople are trained to assess how you walk and can recommend the best shoes for you.
- Make sure the shoe has enough room for an orthotic or insole if required.

### For more information:

- Government of Canada  
[www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/services/health/promotion/footcare](http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/services/health/promotion/footcare)
- Manitoba Podiatry Association  
[www.mbpodiatry.ca](http://www.mbpodiatry.ca)
- Manitoba Association of Footcare Nurses  
[www.footcarenurse.ca/home](http://www.footcarenurse.ca/home)
- FootHealth Centre website  
[www.canadianfootwear.com/foot-health-centre](http://www.canadianfootwear.com/foot-health-centre)

# Manage Your Health Conditions

## Most long-term health conditions can be managed, including:

- Heart conditions
- Diabetes
- Arthritis
- Osteoporosis
- High/low blood pressure
- Depression
- Stroke
- Parkinson's Disease
- Cataracts or other vision problems
- Incontinence or bladder problems

## Health conditions and falling

Health conditions can increase the risk of falling by making you feel dizzy, confused, or light-headed. They can also cause your reactions to be slower, reduce your awareness of your surroundings, and cause blurred vision or a drop in blood pressure.

Other conditions can cause stiff muscles or joints, poor vision, reduced concentration, pain and lack of energy. Fragile bones, or tingling, numbness or loss of feeling in your feet or legs can result in unsteadiness or poor balance.

Some conditions can put you at risk of falling by causing you to change your behavior, such as rushing to the bathroom due to poor bladder control.

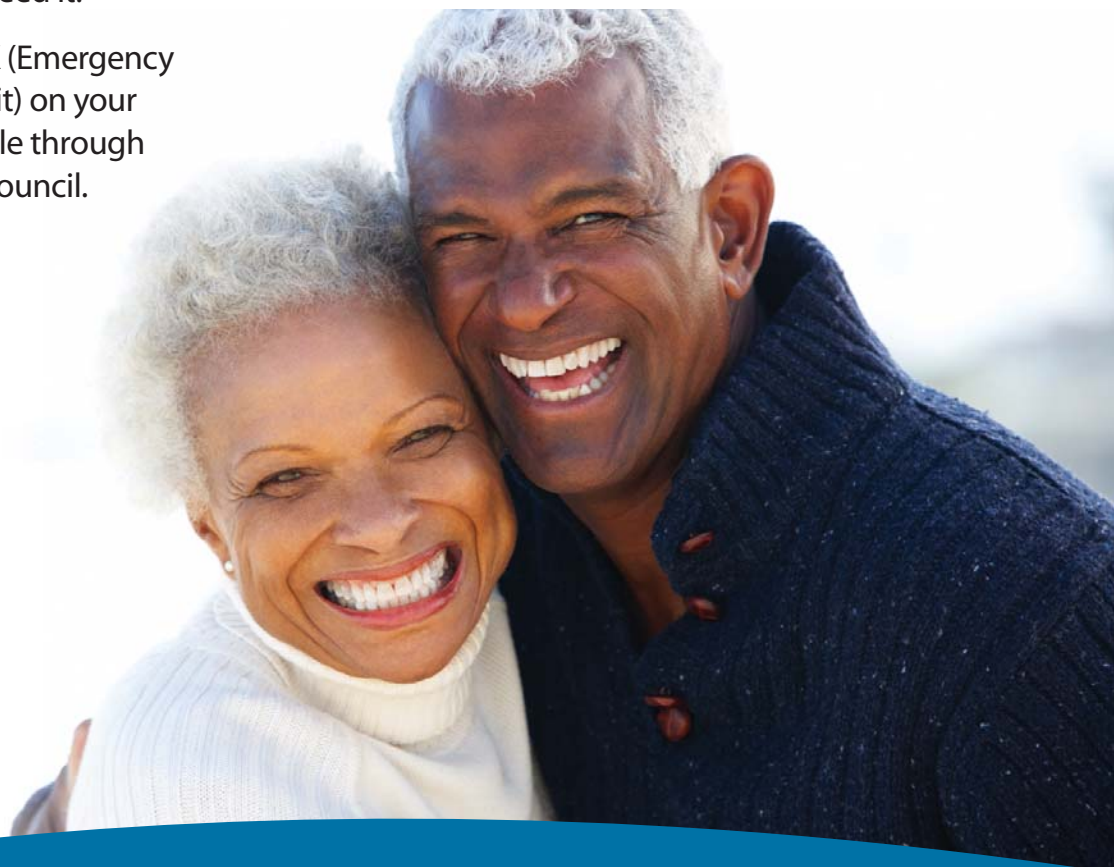


# Take Action!

- Take control and manage long-term health conditions to prevent further deterioration, maintain ability and in some cases even restore any lost ability.
- Have regular checkups with your doctor to discuss any concerns, get early treatment and prevent complications.
- Pay attention to your body and see your doctor or health care provider when you don't feel right.
- Keep your full attention on what you are doing.
- Don't rush. Take breaks when you feel tired.
- Ask for help when you need it.
- Keep an up-to-date ERIK (Emergency Response Information Kit) on your fridge. These are available through your Seniors Resource Council.

## For more information about managing your health, contact:

- Your doctor or health care provider.
- Relevant health agencies or support groups, for example Manitoba Osteoporosis Society or the Heart and Stroke Foundation. Call Contact Community Information to find an appropriate organization, **204-287-8827** in Winnipeg or toll free **1-866-266-4636**.
- Health Links – Info Santé at **204-788-8200** or toll-free **1-888-315-9257**. Call anytime.
- Addictions Foundation of Manitoba about alcohol, substance use and problem gambling by phone at **1-800-463-1554**, or visit **www.afm.mb.ca**



# Take Care of Your Eyesight

Over time, we may develop changes to our eyesight that can cause a fall. Often, these changes happen so gradually that we might not notice them.

## Common changes include:

- blurry vision
- difficulty judging distance and depth
- difficulty seeing well in low light, dark and low-contrast situations
- taking longer for eyes to adjust to changes in light
- a greater sensitivity to glare
- watery eyes
- eye disorders such as cataracts, glaucoma or macular degeneration
- losing balance or getting dizzy when other people or objects are moving around us.



## Take Action!

- Always wear your glasses or eyewear as prescribed.
- Have your glasses and eyewear checked by your optometrist every year.
- Have your eyes checked every two years by an optometrist or ophthalmologist or when you notice any changes in your vision.

- Take extra care when using the stairs and stepping off curbs if you wear bifocal or progressive lens glasses.
- Give your eyes time to adjust when you move into a darker or much brighter area.
- Allow up to two weeks to get used to new eyewear, particularly bifocals or multifocals. If after that time there are still difficulties, see your optometrist.

## For more information:

- Your optometrist or ophthalmologist
- CNIB Helpline at **1-800-563-2642** or visit **www.cnib.ca**
- Focus on Falls Prevention Vision Screening Program at **204-788-8496**





# Consider Safety Equipment

Safety equipment is available to help prevent a fall or protect you if you do have a fall. It is important to use safety equipment that meets your needs and fits you correctly. Your doctor, nurse, physiotherapist or occupational therapist can help you choose the right equipment.

## Canes and Walkers

- If you are unsteady when walking or need to use furniture for support, consider getting a mobility aid such as a cane or walker.
- A physiotherapist or occupational therapist can help you select the best mobility aid for you, make sure it fits and teach you to use it properly.
- Keep your mobility aid with you and within easy reach.
- The rubber tip on your cane should always be in good condition. You can buy replacement tips at the drugstore.
- In the winter, use an ice tip on the end of your cane.
- If you use a walker, make sure that the rubber tips or wheels are in good condition.
- Organize your furniture and remove clutter so you can easily use your walking aid.

## Bath safety equipment

Many falls happen in the bathroom, especially when getting on and off the toilet and getting in and out of the tub.

- Raised toilet seats and grab bars can make it safer when using the toilet.
- Grab bars, non-slip mats, and bath seats can help you stay safer in the tub and shower.
- Walk-in tubs and devices that slowly lower you into the tub are also available.

## Hip Protectors

**Hip protectors can prevent a hip fracture if you fall.**

- Hip protectors are pads that are worn over the hips and under your clothing to help protect you from a fracture if you fall.
- Hip protectors are available in a brief or belt design.
- Home medical supply stores carry different brands, styles and colours.
- Hip protectors only work if you wear them. Try on different types and sizes of hip protectors to find ones that fits well, are comfortable and that you will wear.
- Look for hip protectors that are easy to wash.

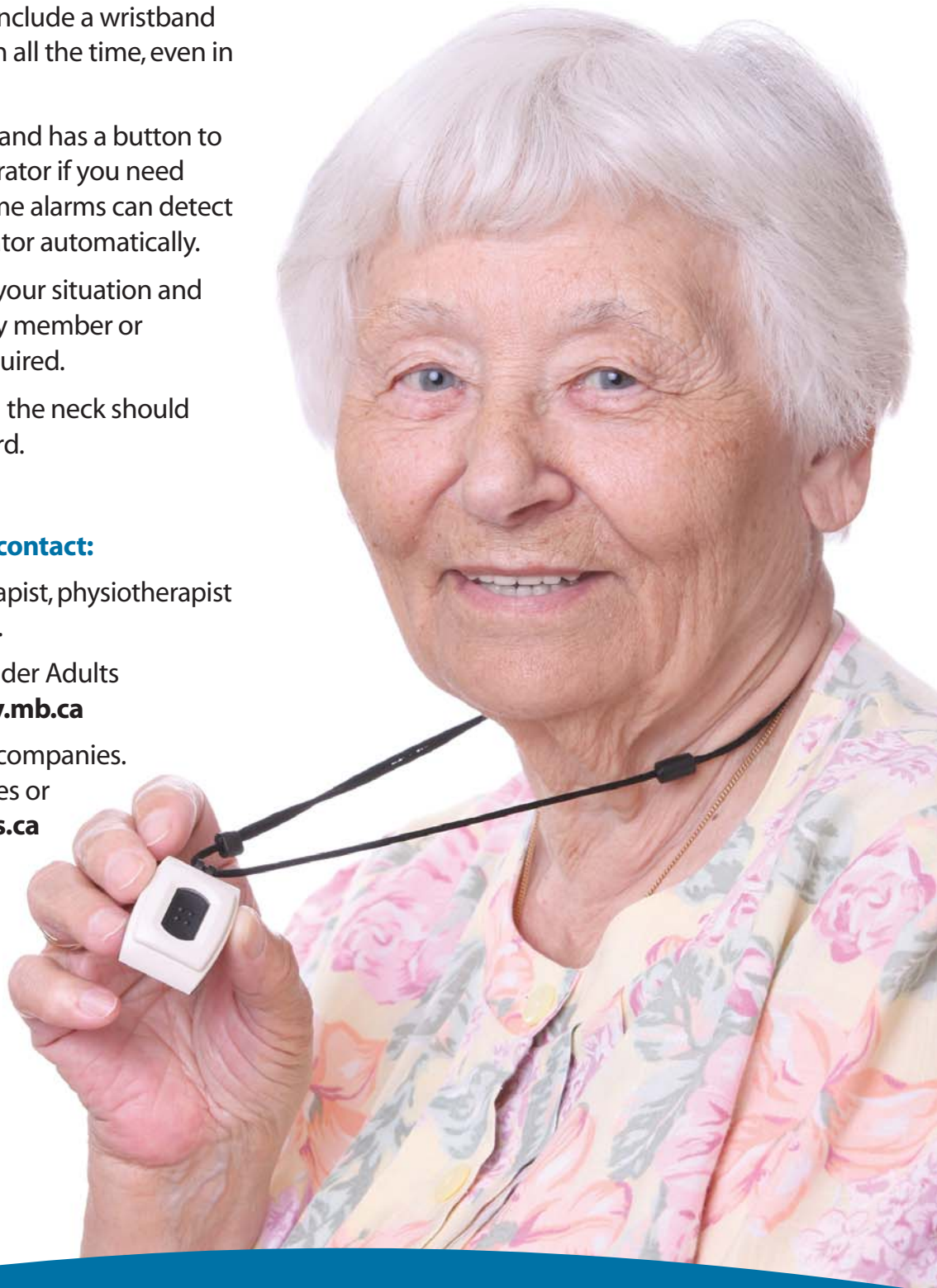


## Medical Alert Systems

- Medical alert systems can help you and your family feel more secure about you living alone.
- Medical alert systems include a wristband or pendant that is worn all the time, even in the shower.
- The pendant or wrist band has a button to connect you to an operator if you need help or have fallen. Some alarms can detect a fall and call the operator automatically.
- The operator assesses your situation and contacts a friend, family member or emergency help as required.
- Pendants worn around the neck should be on a break-away cord.

### For more information, contact:

- Your occupational therapist, physiotherapist or health care provider.
- Support Services for Older Adults  
[www.ageopportunity.mb.ca](http://www.ageopportunity.mb.ca)
- Home medical supply companies.  
Check your Yellow Pages or visit [www.preventfalls.ca](http://www.preventfalls.ca)



# Identify, Remove and Report Hazards

Nearly half of all injuries among older adults happen at home and most of these are due to falls. Some falls happen when we don't realize that our physical abilities have changed and we continue to do tasks that put us at risk, such as climbing a ladder or shoveling snow.

The good news is that if we identify hazards, ask for help, and change how we do things, we can decrease our chances of falling. Use the following **Staying on Your Feet Home Safety Checklist** to identify and reduce risks in your home.

## Take Action!

### At Home

#### Floors in all rooms

- Choose non-slip flooring such as carpet or slip-resistant tiles.
- Flooring should be in good condition with no curled edges or loose tiles.
- Remove throw rugs and loose mats.
- Keep floors free of clutter and obstacles.
- Keep walkways free from electrical and telephone cords.
- Clean up spills right away.
- Have contrasting colours or textures where there is a change in floor level.

#### Lighting in all rooms

- Make sure all rooms, hallways and stairs have lighting that is bright enough for you to see clearly.
- Light switches should be easy to reach and near each doorway.
- Replace burned out light bulbs as soon as you can. Ask for help if the bulb is high up or difficult to reach.
- Use nightlights in hallways and in the bathroom.
- Keep a flashlight nearby in case of a power outage.

#### Kitchen

- Wear shoes with non-slip soles when working in the kitchen.
- Arrange your kitchen so that items you use regularly are easy to reach when you are standing.
- Store light items higher up and heavy items in lower cupboards.
- Ask for help if you need to reach high places.

## Bathroom

- Use a rubber bath mat in the tub and shower.
- Use a hand held shower and a bath seat.
- Install grab bars and a raised toilet seats to help you get on and off the toilet seat easily.
- Use installed grab bars, not towel racks, for support when getting in and out of the bath and shower.
- Install bathroom flooring that is slip-resistant when wet.

## Bedroom

- Have a lamp, light switch or flashlight within reach of your bed.
- Keep a telephone next to your bed.
- Keep your walking aid within easy reach, or have grab bars to help you get safely in and out of bed.
- Keep eye glasses within reach.

## Remember!

- Ask for help if you need it.
- Give your full attention to what you are doing.
- Don't rush. Take breaks when you feel tired.

## Stairs

- Make sure that stairs and steps are well lit.
- Have sturdy handrails installed on both sides of the stairs.
- Use adhesive non-slip strips or contrasting paint to clearly mark the edges of the steps.
- Install light switches at the top and bottom of your stairs.
- Remove reading glasses when using the stairs.
- Never rush on the stairs.

## Outside Your Home

- Use adhesive non-slip strips or contrasting paint to clearly mark the edges of the steps.
- Install a sturdy handrail along the steps.
- Keep sidewalks, driveway and decks around your home in good repair.
- Keep entrances, decks and sidewalks well lit and clear of obstacles such as leaves, snow and ice.
- Clean grease and oil from your garage floor.
- Put away rakes, shovels, hoses and items that could cause a trip.

## General

- Keep a list of emergency telephone numbers near your phone.

# Take Action!

## In the Community

**Some common hazards that can cause falls in the community include:**

- Cracks in the sidewalks
- Poor lighting
- Icy sidewalks
- Slippery floors at the shopping mall

If you see a hazard in a public building, contact the building manager or owner. If you see a hazard in the community, report it to your municipal office. (In Winnipeg, call **311**)

### For more information:

- Visit [www.preventfalls.ca](http://www.preventfalls.ca) for a detailed home safety assessment and some helpful safety tips.
- To have a your home assessed for falls and crime prevention, contact Safety Aid, Age & Opportunity at [www.ageopportunity.mb.ca](http://www.ageopportunity.mb.ca) or phone **204-956-6440**
- Manitoba Housing's financial assistance for minor home adaptations/changes for low-income seniors [www.gov.mb.ca/housing/pubs/hasi.pdf](http://www.gov.mb.ca/housing/pubs/hasi.pdf), phone **204-945-5566** in Winnipeg or toll free **1-866-689-5566**.
- To report community hazards contact your municipal office (in Winnipeg, call **311**)



# What to Do if You Fall

- Try to stay calm and remain still for a moment to assess your situation.
- Activate your personal alarm if you have one.
- If you are not badly injured and think that you can get up, take time to make sure you are doing it safely. If you can, use stable furniture to help pull yourself up.
- If you can't get up, try sliding or crawling to the phone, front door or alarm and call out for help.
- If you are in doubt about how serious the injury is, call an ambulance. Stay as warm as possible until the ambulance arrives.

## Remember!

- After every fall, it is important to talk with your family, neighbour, friend, or health care provider to determine the cause of your fall and what actions need to be taken to prevent another fall.
- Keep a personal alarm or mobile phone on you at all times so you can call for help in an emergency.
- Give a family member or neighbour a spare key so they can get to you quickly.

## Take Action!

While most falls do not result in serious injury, it is wise to **make a plan** of things you can do to prevent another fall. This may help you feel more confident and in control in the event of a fall, and will be reassuring to your family and friends.







**Staying On Your Feet**   
*Taking Steps to Prevent Falls*

March 2015



Winnipeg Regional  
Health Authority  
*Caring for Health*

Office régional de la  
santé de Winnipeg  
*À l'écoute de notre santé*

**Manitoba** 