

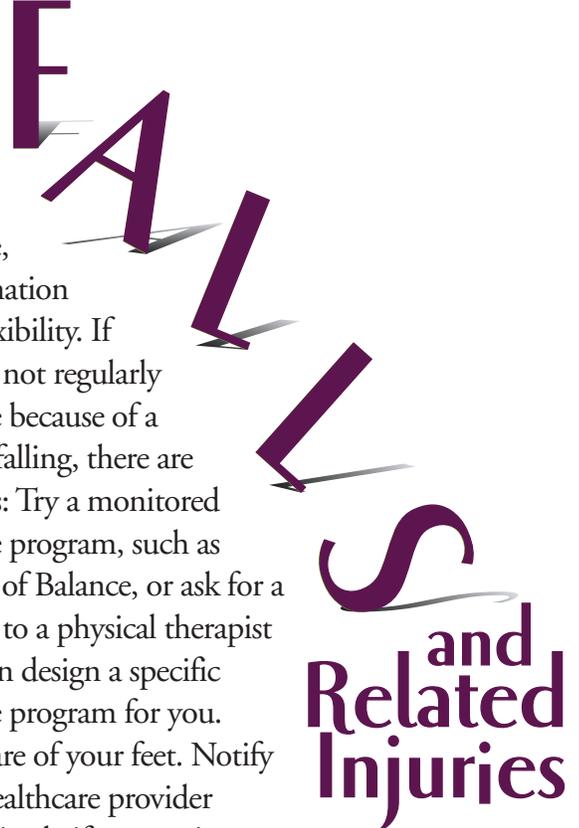
Reducing the Risk of

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Falls are the leading cause of injury and accidental death in the U.S. among older adults. While most falls do not result in serious injury, the odds of falling after age 65 are about 1 in 3. The risk increases among seniors due to a combination of common age-related physical changes, medical conditions and medications commonly used to treat these conditions.

Although it may be tempting to live more cautiously as you age, allowing a fear of falling to alter your life or limit activities is not the answer. Many falls and related injuries are preventable just by following these eight steps:

1. During your next office visit, be sure to tell your doctor about any falls you've had in the past. Some related topics also worth discussing with include:
 - Strength and balance
 - Sight and hearing
 - Cardiovascular status
 - Current exercise and/or activities
 - Fear of falling
 - Medications – including over-the-counter products
2. Ask your doctor if you would benefit from a bone density scan, also referred to as a DXA scan (for Dual energy X-ray absorptiometry.) This is a pain-free screening of your bones to check for osteoporosis. As we age our bones can become brittle and more prone to fractures. Your healthcare provider might want to prescribe a medication to help strengthen your bones or recommend an over-the-counter supplement, such as calcium with vitamin D. Strong bones can help reduce injury at the time of a fall.
3. Keep moving. Physical activities, such as walking, water aerobics or Tai Chi, improve your strength, balance, coordination and flexibility. If you do not regularly exercise because of a fear of falling, there are options: Try a monitored exercise program, such as Matter of Balance, or ask for a referral to a physical therapist who can design a specific exercise program for you.
4. Take care of your feet. Notify your healthcare provider immediately if you notice any changes in your feet, including sores, discoloration in your skin or nails, or pain and swelling.
5. Make your home as safe as possible by removing clutter, maintaining your home in good repair, securing loose rugs/mats, using non-skid floor wax and bright lighting.
6. Avoid unnecessary risks. Use assistive devices, such as grab bars, when needed.
7. After lying down, take your time as you try to stand up. Sit on the side of the bed or couch for a few minutes before standing. Getting up too fast can cause dizziness or loss of balance.
8. Get an emergency response system or alert button for use in your home. For those rare occasions when accidental falls happen, an emergency call system can provide peace of mind and help you avoid an unnecessary fear of falling.



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