



# Falls Prevention

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# FALLS

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In older adults:

- 1 in 4 Americans ages 65 or older fall each year.
- 1 out of every 5 falls causes an injury, such as broken bones or head injury.
- 72.8% of falls occur in the home.
- 95% of hip fractures are caused by falling.
- Injuries from falls are the leading cause of death in older adults than any other injury.

# ARE YOU AT RISK FOR FALLS?

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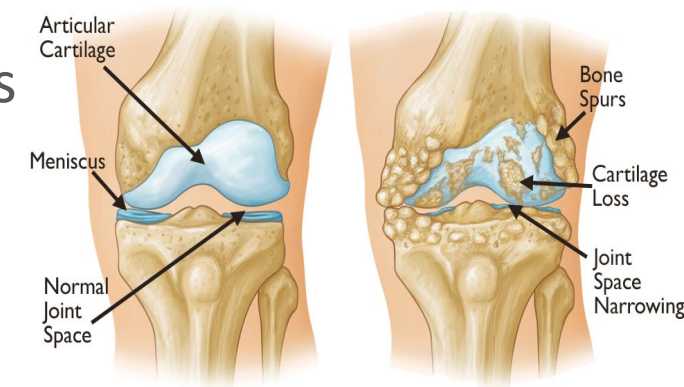
There are many medical conditions which can put you at risk for falling. Here are a few:

- Osteoarthritis (OA)
- Osteoporosis
- Postural Hypotension
- Diabetes
- Medications

# OSTEOARTHRITIS (OA)

**Osteoarthritis (OA) is the most common form of arthritis where the cartilage in the joint breaks down causing the bone to change.**

- People with osteoarthritis (OA) are at an increased risk for falls and fall-related injuries.
- OA is a common condition of the joints and can affect the joints in your hands, hip, neck, and lower back.
- OA occurs when the cartilage (the cushion in your joints) breaks down causing inflammation and swelling.
  - As the cartilage wears away in the joints, it causes the bones to rub against each other causing damage.
  - OA can cause pain, stiffness, decreased mobility, affect your balance and make you more likely to fall.



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

# OSTEOARTHRITIS (OA)

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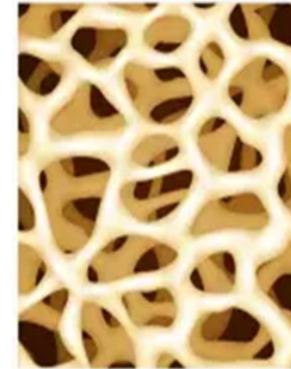
## Steps to take for managing OA and prevent falls:

- Stay active with regular physical activities to maintain joint flexibility, strength, and balance, such as:
  - Walking
  - Swimming
  - Gentle exercises such as Tai-Chi, Otago exercise program
- Schedule regular checkups with your doctor.
- Take an active approach to your health.

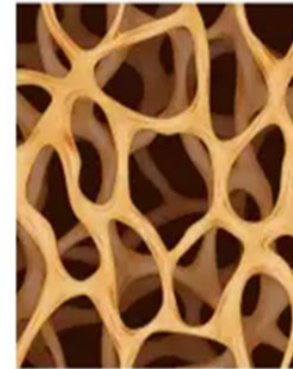
# OSTEOPOROSIS

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- **As we grow older, bones can become weaker due to not having enough Vitamin D in your body. This can lead to osteoporosis, putting you at risk for falls and hip fractures.**
  - Often called the ‘silent’ disease because there is often no symptoms and can go undetected until a broken (fracture) bone occurs.
  - More than 95% of hip fractures are caused by falling, usually by falling sideways.
  - Women more often than men have osteoporosis, which weakens bones.



Normal Bone



Bone with Osteoporosis

# OSTEOPOROSIS

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## Steps to talk to strengthen your bones:

- Talk to your doctor to see if you are at risk for falling, if the medicines you take may make you dizzy or sleepy, or if you should be taking Vitamin-D supplements
- Make sure you get screened for Osteoporosis.
- Do strength and balance exercises to make your legs stronger and improve balance.
- Have your eyes checked at least once a year.
- Make your home safer by:
  - Getting rid of items that you can trip over.
  - Add grab bars inside and outside your shower and next to the toilet.
  - Put railings on both sides of the stairs.
  - Make sure your home is well lit.



# POSTURAL HYPOTENSION

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**Postural Hypotension (also called Orthostatic Hypotension) is caused when your blood pressure drops when you change positions.**

- For example, going from lying down to sitting up, or from sitting to standing.

**Some medications can cause you to have postural hypotension:**

- If you take a water pill (diuretics).
- If you take antidepressants.
- Or you take other medicines that lower your blood pressure.



# POSTURAL HYPOTENSION

Postural hypotension can be caused by:

- High blood pressure
- Or conditions that can put you at risk are:
  - If you have diabetes
  - If you have heart failure
  - If you have hardening of the arteries (atherosclerosis),
  - If you have Parkinson's disease
  - If you have dementia
  - If you have dehydration
  - If you have vitamin B-12 deficiency
  - If you have anemia
  - If you have alcoholism
  - When you have been lying in bed too long



# POSTURAL HYPOTENSION

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**Symptoms can be different for each person but may include:**

- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Feeling about to faint, passing out, or falling
- Headaches, blurry or tunnel vision Feeling vague or muddled
- Feeling pressure across the back of your shoulders or neck
- Feeling nauseous, or hot and clammy Weakness or fatigue

**Symptoms can happen when you are:**

- Stand or sit up suddenly
- In the morning, when your blood pressure is usually lower
- After you eat a large meal or drink alcohol
- While you are exercising
- If you are straining on the toilet
- If you are ill, anxious or panicky

# POSTURAL HYPOTENSION

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## Things you can do to manage your postural hypotension:

- Talk to your healthcare provider about any symptoms.
- Ask your healthcare provider if any of the doses of the medicines you take should be reduced or even stopped.
- Get out of bed slowly by:
  - First, sit up.
  - Second, sit on the side of your bed.
  - Third, slowly stand up.
- Take your time when changing position, such as when getting up from a chair.
- Try to sit down when washing, showering, dressing, or working in the kitchen.

# POSTURAL HYPOTENSION

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## Things you can do to manage your postural hypotension (continued):

- Exercise gently before getting up, for example:
  - Move your feet up and down.
  - Clench and unclench your hands.
  - After standing, march in place.
- Make sure you have something to hold on to when you stand up.
- Do not walk if you feel dizzy.
- Drink 6-8 glasses of water or low-calorie drinks each day.
  - Check with your healthcare provider if you are on a limited amount of fluid intake each day and how much you should drink.
- Avoid taking very hot baths or showers.
- Try sleeping with extra pillows to raise your head.

# DIABETES

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**If you have diabetes, you can be at risk for falls due to:**

- Hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) can trigger a loss of balance.
  - If your blood sugar reading drops below 70mg/DL, make sure to eat rapid-acting carbohydrates immediately.
- Large-joint issues. People with type 1 diabetes seem to develop issues in their shoulders, elbows, hips, knees, and ankles, which can lead to pain and disability.
- Peripheral neuropathy causes a loss of sensation in your feet and/or legs, which can cause a loss of balance.
- Vision loss can lead to unsteadiness on your feet and difficulty objects blocking your path.



News Medical Life Sciences

# DIABETES

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**If you have Diabetes, here are some things you can do to improve your balance and reduce your risk of falling:**

- Keep active and exercise by including things such as:
  - Pool aerobics
  - Gentle Aerobics
  - Balance training
  - Weight bearing exercises
- Walking may be the best and simplest exercise.

# MEDICATIONS

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**Some medications you may take can affect your balance including:**

- Tranquilizers
- Sedatives
- Antidepressants
- Pain medications
- Some medicines you can buy over the counter (OTC) can affect your balance.
- High blood pressure medications may cause dizziness when you stand up.
- Osteoarthritis (OA) is often treated with medication such as oxycodone and hydrocodone, which can have side effects such as:
  - Sedation
  - Dizziness
  - May worsen coordination and balance



# MEDICATIONS

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**If you are concerned about the medications you are taking, make some time to:**

- Visit your healthcare provider, who can evaluate your medications for possible side effects and other problems.
- Speak to your pharmacist and take time to get counseled about your medications and any effects.



# OTHER RISK FACTORS

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**General health and safety issues that may put you at risk of falling include:**

- You have lower body weakness.
- You have foot pain or wear poor footwear.
- You have difficulty walking or have balance issues.
- You bladder urgencies.

**Home and community hazards may include:**

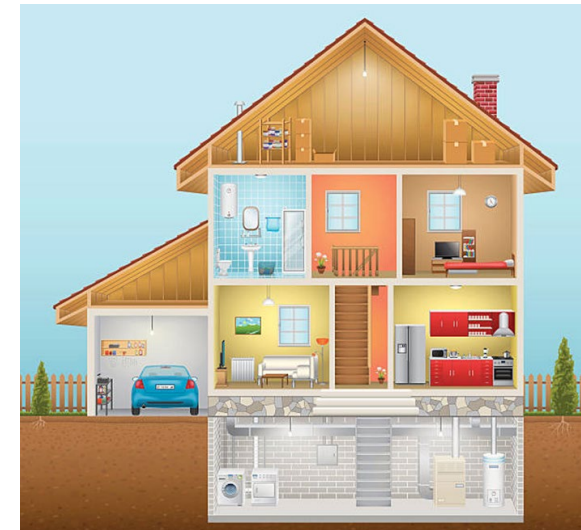
- Main bathroom located on the second floor
- Area rugs
- Broken or uneven steps
- Throw rugs
- Clutter in walkways/on stairs
- Poor lighting
- Uneven sidewalks
- Broken sidewalks/step
- Icy or slippery walkways

# FALLS PREVENTION

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## Six steps to prevent you from falling:

- Find a good balance and exercise program.
- Talk to your healthcare provider.
- Regularly review your medications with your doctor or pharmacist.
- Get your vision and hearing checked annually and update your eyeglasses.
- Keep your home safe.
- Talk to your family member.



# FALLS PREVENTION

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## What you can do to make your home safe:

- We often move around our homes without thinking of potential hazards that can cause us to fall.
- Following is a **check-list** of some simple changes you can make to reduce your risk of falling:

### Floors, Stairways, and Hallways

- Make sure you have handrails on both sides of the steps.
- Don't let anything you are carrying block your view of the steps.
- Make sure there is good lighting, especially in hallways and stairways.
- Consider using plug-in motion-activated lights.
- Keep walkways free of clutter.
- Make sure carpets are not loose or have rolled edges.

- Do not use throw rugs.
- Never walk on wet, slippery floors.

### Bathrooms

- Make sure there are grab bars in your bathroom near the tub or shower and toilet.
- Use non-skid mats or carpets on all surfaces which can get wet.
- Use a nightlight in the bathroom.

# FALLS PREVENTION

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## Bedrooms

- Install nightlights and have the light switch near your bed.
- Keep a flashlight by your bed in case of power outages.
- Keep your phone near your bed.

## Kitchen

- Keep pots, pans and kitchen utensils that are used often where they can be easily reached.
- Clean spills up right away.
- To prevent fatigue or loss of balance prepare foods sitting down.

## Outdoor Spaces

- Make sure your outdoor steps are not broken or uneven.
- Use non-slip material on your outdoor stairs.
- Keep your lawn, porch, and deck free of fallen tree branches or other debris.
- Install grab bars near the doors to help you balance while opening your door.
- Make sure to leave the porch light on when going out for the evening.
- In the winter months keep your walkways free of ice.

# FALLS PREVENTION

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## Other Areas In Your Home

- Keep walkways free of extension cords.
- Make sure furniture and other objects are not blocking your walkway.
- Make sure you can easily get in and out of your sofa or chair easily.
- Keep items you use often within reach.
- Don't stand on chairs or tables to reach items that are out of your reach.
- Don't let your cat or dog trip you.
- Keep a list of your emergency numbers near your phone, in cell phone, or a card in your wallet or purse.

# RESOURCES

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## PHW Disease Management Programs:

To learn more about PHW's disease management programs or make a referral:

- PAHealthWellness.com Website: <https://www.pahealthwellness.com/>
- Call participant services: 1-844-626-6813 (TTY:711)
- Email: [phwcasemanagement@pahealthwellness.com](mailto:phwcasemanagement@pahealthwellness.com)
  
- **FALLS PREVENTION CHECKLIST** available for download on Participant Portal.

## Other Resources:

Centers for Disease Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- Still Going Strong.
- Weblink:  
[https://www.cdc.gov/StillGoingStrong/?gad\\_source=1&gclid=EAlaIQobChMIzfei67qchgMVEFxHAR0TnAi9EAAYAiAAEgJDxuD\\_BwE](https://www.cdc.gov/StillGoingStrong/?gad_source=1&gclid=EAlaIQobChMIzfei67qchgMVEFxHAR0TnAi9EAAYAiAAEgJDxuD_BwE)
- Phone: 800-232-4636

Administration for Community Living

- Falls Prevention Resources for Older Adults and Caregivers
- Weblink: <https://acl.gov/FallsPrevention>

# RESOURCES

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