

# 5 TIPS for caregivers

## REDUCING YOUR FALL RISK

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The bad news: the most common cause of injury or death for older adults is a fall in the home. The good news? Many falls can be easily prevented. A few simple changes to your home environment and personal routines can make all the difference. Here are five tips for reducing your loved one's fall risk.

### 1 Keep it lit, clear, and in reach.

As far as in the home itself, try to focus on three things: keep it lit, keep it clear, and keep things in reach. First, make sure all rooms and hallways are well-lit. Add extra lamps or nightlights in darker rooms, and switch to brighter bulbs to make sure your loved one can see things clearly. Try to eliminate clutter, especially on stairs and in walkways. Also make sure the furniture is arranged in such a way that there are easy pathways between rooms. No one wants to do the limbo just to get to the bathroom! Finally, keep things within easy reach. In the bedroom make sure a lamp and telephone are close to the bed. In the kitchen, keep everyday dishes within reach. No one should be using a stool just to get a drinking glass. Keeping everything in reach without a stool is even better.

### 2 Managing medications.

Personally, certain health problems and medications can increase fall risk, so talk with the doctor to see if any recent concerns could be affecting your loved ones' balance and coordination, especially if there is a change in health history. Certain medications may cause dizziness or confusion. Also, ask the pharmacist if any of your medications could have side effects with any other vitamins, supplements, or over-the-counter medications they take. If the meds don't work well together, this could also affect coordination and balance. Keep a list of all of your loved ones medications and supplements to bring with you to each appointment. This can help prevent problems before they even start.

### 3 An apple a day?

While you may think you want to keep the doctor away, scheduling regular visits to keep up with your loved one's overall health is important for many reasons, and improving their fall risk is one of them. Routine check-ups can catch many potential risks. An annual physical and blood pressure checks are important to make sure your loved one doesn't experience dizziness when they stand. Regular eye exams are important to make sure their vision hasn't changed, and they can still see clearly. It's easy to trip over something you can't see! Finally, if they use a walker or cane, make sure it is properly sized and fitted for the person. It will be easier to keep moving with the proper assistance. With that being said...

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### 4 Keep moving!

Don't be afraid for your loved one to get up and move. Older adults often fear that exercise may lead to a fall, but physical activity strengthens muscles, increases flexibility, and improves balance, all of which actually decreases the risk of falls. Walking, climbing stairs, and other

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daily activities are great to maintain strength and may help slow bone loss. Practicing tai chi or pilates can help with balance and control. There are many other group and senior exercise programs in the area as well. The good news too, if your loved one does have a fall, having stronger muscles and bones can prevent fractures and other more serious injuries.

### 5 Check your closet.

Has your loved one lost weight? Or maybe their clothes are getting a little stretched out? Make sure clothing fits properly to prevent it from catching on something. Proper shoes are especially important as well to prevent falls. Make sure shoes are still sturdy, supportive, and have non-skid soles. And make sure they still fit properly too. It's time to toss any that don't make the cut! This includes house shoes or slippers too, as they may get just as much wear and tear!



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