

EXPERT OPINION on fall prevention

“Falling represents one of the few health conditions meeting all the criteria for prevention – high frequency, evidence of preventability, and heavy burden of morbidity.”

— Mary Tinetti, PhD and
Christianna Williams, MPH

“You can be safe from falling in your home. By working with your doctor and other health professionals, such as physiotherapists, occupational therapists and pharmacists, many falls can be prevented.”

— Katherine Berg, PhD

Where can you get more information?

For more information contact:

- ▶ Your family doctor or nurse practitioner
- ▶ Other health care practitioner, such as a nurse or physical therapist

And use the Internet:

- ▶ Active Independent Aging: A Community Guide for Falls Prevention and Active Living: www.falls-chutes.com
- ▶ Government of Canada’s Public Safety Branch: www.safecanada.ca/seniors_e.asp
- ▶ Health Canada’s Division of Aging and Seniors: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/seniors-aines OR www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/seniors-aines
- ▶ Ministry of Health and Long Term Care: Assistive Devices Program: www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/public_mn.html

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- Primary Health Care Transition Fund
- Homewood Research Institute, Guelph, ON
- Department of Health Studies and Gerontology
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Stay on Your Feet

Don't Fall Head Over Heels



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Why are falls important?

A fall, slip or trip can happen to anyone at any time. Each year about one third of Canadian seniors has a fall. Falls in older persons often result in serious injuries, such as broken bones. Falls can also lead to a loss of independence (like not being able to walk outside without help), hospitalization, a reduced quality of life, and in some cases, death.

- ▶ Falling *is not* a normal part of aging.
- ▶ Not every fall can be prevented, but you can reduce your risk of injuries due to falls.
- ▶ About \$1 billion is spent each year caring for seniors that have fallen.

Who is at risk?

Things in and around your home that may increase your risk include cracked sidewalks, a lack of grab bars, loose throw rugs, and poor lighting. Your chance of falling also increases if you are in poor health, use certain medications (like sleeping pills), have poor eyesight, or have trouble walking or keeping your balance. Doing too little physical activity or drinking too much alcohol can also increase your risk.



Helpful tips for preventing falls

- ▶ Stay physically active. Speak to your doctor prior to beginning an exercise program.
- ▶ Review your medications with your doctor at least every six months. Talk to your pharmacist and doctor if your medications make you feel dizzy, light-headed or faint.
- ▶ Wear proper footwear that provides good support. Don't wear loose slippers or socks that might make you slip or trip.

- ▶ Have regular check-ups with your doctor. Also have regular eye and hearing exams.
- ▶ Inform your doctor of any changes in your health.
- ▶ Be aware of your limitations. Ask for help if you think you need it.
- ▶ Wear your glasses and hearing aids.
- ▶ Get rid of clutter on your floors and stairs.
- ▶ Focus on one task at a time. Use caution when walking and when getting up from a chair or bed.
- ▶ If you have problems with your balance or with walking, you may need a device like a cane or walker. Speak with your doctor or other health care professionals (physiotherapist or occupational therapist).