

RI Fall Prevention Partnership

A project of the RI Long-Term-Care Coordinating Council

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Facts

- 9 out of 10 hip fractures are caused by falls
- Persons with hip fractures are 5-20% more likely to die in first year after fall
- Most falls happen to women in their own homes in the afternoon
- Following a fall, 15-25% of persons who were living at home, will still be in long-term care facilities
- Fractures are the 5th highest cause of hospitalizations among RI women age 65 and over*

Fall Prevention Activities

- **Improve Strength and Balance**
 - Do muscle strengthening exercises
 - Get good vision correction
 - Practice wearing bi- and tri-focals
 - Do daily balance exercises
- **Check your medications – some may increase risk of falling – discuss with your health provider or pharmacist**
 - Blood pressure meds
 - Heart meds
 - Diuretics/water pills
 - Muscle relaxants and tranquilizers
- **Promote Strong Bones**
 - Get adequate amounts of Calcium (1200 mg/day from food and supplements) and Vitamin D

- Exercise several times a week (both weight bearing and resistance training)
- Ask your health care provider about a Bone Density Test
- Ask your health care provider about medications to reduce bone loss to prevent fractures

Daily Balance Exercises

- While holding back of chair, sink or counter top, practice standing on one leg. Gradually increase the time to reach one minute, and try without holding on as your balance improves.
- While holding back of chair, counter or sink top, practice standing on your toes then rock back to balance on your heels. Hold each position for 6 seconds.
- While holding back of chair, counter or sink top, with both hands, make a big circle to the left with hips, repeat to right. Do not move shoulders or feet. Repeat 5 times.



Safety First to Prevent Falls

At any age, people can improve their environments in ways that reduce their risk of falling and breaking a bone.

Outdoor Safety Tips

- In nasty weather, use a walker or cane for added stability and wear warm boots with rubber soles for added traction.
- When going from in to outdoors allow time for your eyes to adjust to light changes
- Look carefully at floor surfaces in public buildings. Many floors are made of highly polished marble or tile that can be very slippery. When floors have plastic or carpet runners in place, stay on them whenever possible.
- Identify community services that can provide assistance, such as 24 hour pharmacies that deliver, grocery stores that take orders over the phone and deliver, especially in poor weather.
- Use a shoulder bag, fanny pack or backpack to leave hands free.
- Stop at curbs and check height before stepping up or down. Be cautious at curbs that have been cut away to allow access for bikes or wheelchairs. Any incline may lead to a fall.

Indoor Safety Tips

- Keep all rooms free from clutter.
- Keep floor surfaces smooth but not slippery. When entering rooms, be aware of differences in floor levels and thresholds.
- Wear supportive, low-heeled shoes even at home. Avoid walking around in socks, stockings or floppy, backless slippers.
- Check that all carpets and area rugs have skid-proof backing or are tacked to the floor, including carpeting on stairs.
- Keep electrical cords and telephone lines out of walkways.

- Be sure that stairwells are well lit and have handrails on both sides. Consider placing fluorescent tape on step edges.
- For optimal safety, install grab bars on bathroom walls beside tubs, showers and toilets. If you are unstable on your feet, consider using a plastic chair with a back and non-skid leg tips in the shower.
- Use a rubber bath mat in the shower or tub.
- Keep a flashlight with fresh batteries beside your bed. Change position slowly from lying to sitting to standing to prevent dizziness.
- Add ceiling fixtures to rooms lit by lamps only; or install lamps that can be turned on by a switch near the entry point into the room. Another option is to install voice- or sound-activated lamps.
- If you must use a step stool for hard to reach areas, use a sturdy one with a handrail and wide steps. A better option is to reorganize work and storage areas to minimize the need for stooping or excessive reaching.
- Consider purchasing a portable phone that you can take with you from room to room to provide security. Not only can you answer the phone without rushing for it, but you can also call for help should an accident occur.
- Don't let prescriptions run low. Always keep at least one week's worth of medications on hand at home. Check prescriptions with your physician and pharmacist to see if they may be increasing your risk of falling. If you take multiple medications, check with your physician and pharmacist about possible interactions between the different medications.
- Arrange with family or friend for daily contact. One person should always know where you are.
- If you live alone, you may wish to contract with a monitoring company that will respond to your call 24 hours a day.

Sources: Online Fact Sheet from National Resource Center of NIH Osteoporosis and Related Bone Diseases; *RI Department of Health
