

Simple facts about Falls and Older Adults

Source: NIH Senior Health: Falls
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/falls.html>

Many people have a friend or relative who has fallen. The person may have slipped while walking or felt dizzy and fallen when standing up from a chair. Maybe you've fallen yourself.

If you or an older person you know has fallen, you're not alone. More than one in three people age 65 years or older falls each year. The risk of falling – and fall-related problems – rises with age.

Among older adults, falls are the number one cause of fractures, hospital admissions for trauma, loss of independence, and injury deaths.

Fractures caused by falls can lead to hospital stays and disability. Most often, fall-related fractures are in the person's hip, pelvis, spine, arm, hand, or ankle.

Hip fractures are one of the most serious types of fall injury. They are a leading cause of medical problems and death among older adults. Only half of older adults hospitalized for a broken hip can return home or live on their own after the injury. Osteoporosis, a disease that involves loss of bone mass, increases the chance of hip and other fractures if a person falls.

Many older adults are afraid of falling. This fear becomes more common as people age, even among those who haven't fallen. It may lead older people to avoid activities such as walking, shopping, or taking part in social activities.

Do You Know your Balance Score?

FALLS CAN BE PREVENTED!

Your balance score is calculated by a simple non-invasive computerized test that identifies your risk for a fall. Knowing your balance score is the first step in preventing injury from a fall.

If you're worried about falling, talk with your doctor or another health care provider. Your doctor might refer you to a physical therapist, or PT. A PT can help you improve your balance and walking and help build your walking confidence. Getting rid of your fear of falling can help you to stay active, maintain your physical health, and prevent future falls.

If you fall, be sure to discuss the fall with your doctor, even if you aren't hurt. Many underlying causes of falls can be treated or corrected.

After a fall, your doctor may suggest physical therapy, use of a walking aid, or other steps to help prevent future falls. These steps can also make you more confident in your abilities.



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Exercise to improve your balance and strengthen your muscles helps to prevent falls. Changing your medicines or your eyewear prescription can help, too. You can also make your home safer to avoid falling.

Falls are not an inevitable part of life, even as a person gets older. You can take action to prevent falls. Your doctor or other health care providers can help you decide what changes will help.

Sensory problems can cause falls, too. If your senses don't work well, you might be less aware of your environment. For instance, having numb feet may mean you don't sense where you are stepping.

Not seeing well can also result in falls. One reason is that it may take a while for your eyes to adjust to see clearly when you move between darkness and light.

Take this Quiz!

1. The risk of falling and fall-related injuries rises as a person gets older.

TRUE is the correct answer. The risk of falling and fall-related injuries increases with age. More than one-third of people age 65 or older fall each year. A simple fall can cause a fracture, head injury, or other injury.

2. Hip fractures are one of the most serious types of fall injury among older adults.

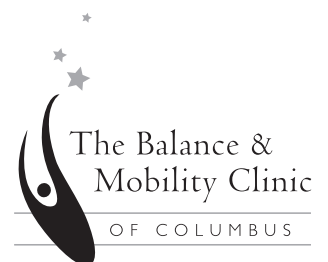
TRUE is the correct answer. Hip fractures are a major cause of medical problems and death among older adults. Only half of older adults hospitalized for a broken hip can return home or live on their own after the injury.

3. Many older adults are afraid of falling.

TRUE is the correct answer. Fear of falling becomes more common as people age, even if they haven't fallen before. Your doctor or other health care providers can help you find ways to prevent falls and cope with this concern.

4. Falls are an inevitable part of getting older.

FALSE is the correct answer. Falls can be prevented, even as people age. Your doctor or other health care providers might suggest changing your medications or eyewear to help prevent falls. Staying active and making your home safer can also help prevent falls.



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