

TAKE ACTION

to prevent a fall before it happens.



Anyone can fall, but as you age the risk increases. The good news is that falls are preventable. You can take action to stay mobile and independent.

“I was rushing to answer the phone and tripped on the carpet and fell. My old floppy slippers probably didn’t help.”

“When I was visiting friends in their new home, I nearly fell. I was too busy looking at the house and didn’t notice the steps.”

“I used to think that falls were just a natural part of getting older. Now I know that there are things I can do to keep my independence.”

Quick Facts

- Over age 65, falls cause more injuries than motor vehicle crashes.
- Every year, 1 in 3 Alberta seniors will fall.
- 40% of people in long-term care homes are there because they have fallen.

Check your medications.

As you age, the way some medications affect you can change and increase your risk of falling. Medications include prescription drugs, over-the-counter pills, vitamins, and herbal supplements.

- Have your doctor or pharmacist review all medications that you are taking each year.
- If pills make you drowsy or dizzy, tell your doctor or pharmacist.
- Keep a current medication list in your wallet and at home.
- Use only one pharmacy to fill your prescriptions.
- Never take anyone else’s medications.
- Alcohol affects medications – be careful.

Keep active.

Regular physical exercise makes you stronger, improves balance, and helps prevent falls.

- Talk to a health care provider before starting any new activity.
- Start slow and easy.
- Do at least 30 minutes of activity every day. You can break this up into three sessions that last 10 minutes each.
- Try activities that you enjoy like walking, dancing, active gardening, swimming, tai chi, yoga, cross-country skiing, etc.

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Make your home safer.

- Make sure halls and stairways are well lit.
- Keep pathways, halls, and stairways clear of clutter.
- Remove throw rugs.
- Look out for pets.
- Keep things you use often on easy to reach, low shelves — things like pots and pans.
- If you need to reach something high, use a sturdy step stool. Do not step on the top step.
- Install safety grab bars for your tub, shower, and toilet.
- Carry a cordless or cell phone with you to call for help in case you fall.

Be street smart.

- Report dangers like cracked sidewalks, poor lighting, or stairs without railings to building managers or your municipality.
- Take your time and carry light loads.
- Avoid wet surfaces like puddles, snow, and ice.
- Watch for wet or slippery floors in public buildings.
- Wear good fitting shoes with non-slip treads on the soles.

What if I can't afford to modify my home or buy special equipment I need?

The *Seniors Programs and Services Guide* lists programs that help adults live on their own, safely. Some programs help pay for equipment or home changes. Get a copy by calling the Seniors Information Line toll-free number at 1-800-642-3853. You can also find the guide on the internet at www.seniors.gov.ab.ca/publications/index.asp

For more information on preventing falls contact:

Health Link Alberta: 1-866-408-LINK (5465)

Finding Balance Alberta: www.findingbalancealberta.ca

Health Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Health Living for Older Adults: 1-888-334-9769 or www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/pau-uap/paguide/older/index.html

In your community contact:

Learn more about injury prevention. Learn how to prevent injuries from affecting you and your family. Call us at the *Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research*, at (780) 492-6019. You can also send us an e-mail at acicr@ualberta.ca or visit our website at www.acicr.ualberta.ca.