

FALL PREVENTION



Falls usually occur suddenly and involuntarily, and as our age increases, the risk of fall-associated fractures increases. These fractures can have serious health consequences and significantly affect our quality of life.

Some of the common causes of falls are the following:

Changes associated with aging

Vision problems such as cataracts, hearing, balance, coordination, and slowed reflexes

Physical problems

Arthritis, amputations, Parkinson's disease, muscle weakness, fragile bones due to osteoporosis that contribute to a minor fall resulting in a fracture

Drugs

Those that can cause dizziness, drowsiness, such as medications for insomnia, among others

Environmental factors

Poor lighting, wet or slippery floors, loose carpets, stairs, uneven floors, lack of railings in the bathroom or obstacles in the way

Risky behaviors

Example: Climbing on a chair to reach high objects, drinking alcoholic beverages

We can prevent falls by following these recommendations:

- Tell your physician at your regular visits if you have had any falls in the past and ask if a test that measures how strong your bones are is right for you.
- Notify your physician if you have any of the following symptoms: dizziness, drowsiness, blurred vision, hearing problems, pain or weakness in your legs or feet.
- Do not take drugs that have not been prescribed for you.
- When you take any drug, read the label and check how much and how often you should use it. Also, check to see if it has any side effects that could make you prone to a fall.
- Limit alcohol consumption as it can affect your balance and reflexes.
- When you wake up, before getting out of bed, sit down first for a few minutes. This is to prevent your blood pressure from dropping, causing dizziness and falling. You can also follow this advice when you are sitting and standing up.
- Wear comfortable and safe shoes, preferably closed and with rubber soles so that they do not slip. Avoid walking in socks or flip-flops.
- If you have been recommended to use canes, crutches, or walkers you should always use them. If you do not know how to use them correctly, ask your physician.
- Do exercises to strengthen your bones, muscles, and to improve your balance. Some recommended exercises are: walking, jogging, dancing, and Tai Chi.
- Adults over 50 should consume 1200 mg of calcium and 800 to 1000 IU of vitamin D daily, if there are no contraindications.

Most falls occur at home, so we must make sure our home is safe.

Take the following precautions in your home to reduce your risk of falling:

- Keep good lighting where you walk, especially at night. Use night lights or lamps in your bedroom, hallway, and bathroom.
- Avoid using rugs
- Pick up wires from electronic equipment
- Hold on to the railings when using the stairs
- Place a rubber mat in the shower or bathtub
- Install handrails in the bathroom, particularly inside the tub, so you can hold on if you slip
- Keep everything within reach. Avoid using stairs or chairs to reach t high objects. If necessary, it is better to ask for help
- If you have trouble walking, use a portable toilet or urinal, instead of getting up to go to the bathroom
- Place the bed near the bathroom
- Avoid applying wax to the floors in your home, or using detergents that make the floor slippery.
- Avoid walking on wet surfaces



Reference:
National Institute on Aging,
National Institute of Health,
National Osteoporosis Foundation,
www.nof.org

Complete Health **MCS** **Classicare** (HMO)

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