

Keeping Your Balance

Easy Ways to Prevent Falling

Falling is a Significant Problem

Over a third of people age 65 and older will fall each year. Falls are not just embarrassing, they are a significant problem for older adults. Falling is the leading cause of injuries in this age group injuries which can threaten a person's independence and active lifestyle. Even falls that do not result in injury can have serious consequences. One consequence is fear of falling which can lead to inactivity.

Imbalance & falling are not normal occurrences of aging. By making simple changes in the home and receiving balance therapy, many falls can be prevented.

Contact your physician for advice and referral information.

Are You At Risk?

Several factors contribute to the risk of falling. The more risk factors you have, the greater your likelihood of falling. However, with every risk factor eliminated, you reduce your risk of future falls.

These risk factors include:

- Previous falls
- Multiple prescription drugs, especially sedatives
- Dizziness
- Impaired balance or walking
- Decreased sensation
- Impaired vision
- Decreased activity level
- Decreased overall strength
- Environmental hazards at home

To Reduce the Chance of Falls & Injury:

1. Exercise regularly to maintain or improve your strength, endurance and flexibility. Walking or strength training can help reduce the bone loss of osteoporosis and reduce risk of fracture. Consult a physician prior to initiating any exercise program.
2. Use a cane or walker to help with your balance if you feel unsteady. Be especially careful when walking on or in darkened conditions or on slick, uneven surfaces. A physical therapist can provide training for using an assistive device.
3. Side effects of some medications can cause loss of balance.
4. Test vision and hearing regularly.
5. Wait a few minutes after sitting down or standing up to avoid lightheadedness or loss of balance.

Easy Ways to Prevent Falling continued on next page



Helpful Hints to Safeguard Your Home:

General:

- Increase lighting throughout the house.
- Use a night light and exterior lights.
- Keep all major pathways clear.
- Make sure carpet or linoleum is firmly and smoothly attached to the floor.
- Firmly attach a railing next to the stairs.

In the bathroom:

- Place grab bars in tub, shower and near toilet.
- Place non-skid mats in tub.
- Remove rugs or put in place only when bathing.
- Use shower chair and hand-held shower head.

In the kitchen:

- Keep frequently used items on lower shelves.
- Use a step stool with handrails to reach higher shelves.
- Do not stand on chairs.
- Clean up spills.
- Remove rugs.

In the bedroom:

- Use a night light or light switch within reach of the bed.
- Place telephone within reach of the bed.
- Consider use of a urinal or bedside commode for night-time toileting.

In the living room:

- Keep telephone and electrical cords away from pathways.
- Move footrests and low tables so they are not in your path.
- Secure or remove rugs so they do not slip.
- Sit in higher chairs and couches to make standing easier.

Footwear Recommendations:

- Wear non-skid, low-heeled shoes.
- Avoid slippers, socks and slip-on shoes.
- Avoid shoes with heavy, thick soles, or narrow heels.

Vestibular/Balance Therapists are available to treat dizziness and balance problems. Ask your physician about referral for assessment and treatment.

Elks Hearing & Balance Center Locations:

Boise - ph. 208.489.4999 • 510 North 2nd Street Suite 201 • Boise ID 83702
Eagle - ph. 208.489.4975 • 3101 E. State Street • Eagle ID 83616
Meridian - ph. 208.489.5999 • 520 S. Eagle Road 1225 • Meridian ID 83642
Nampa - ph. 208.489.5950 • 220 10th Avenue South • Nampa ID 83651
Ontario - ph. 541.881.0970 • 1159 SW 4th Avenue • Ontario, OR 97914