

Slips and Falls

The leading cause of home injuries is slips and falls. Falls are, by far the leading cause of domestic fatalities. The vast majority of fatal falls occur among people age 65 and older and death rates are higher among males.

It is estimated that over 5million injuries per year result from slips and falls suffered at home. More than a million of those requiring emergency room visits to treat falls at home are 65 and older.

PREVENT SLIPS AND FALLS

- Stay Fit: Gentle exercise programs such as tai chi improve balance and strengthen muscles.
- Always use your eyeglasses. Make sure that you can accurately read the labels on your medications before taking them.

IDENTIFY AND CORRECT SLIPS AND FALLS HAZARDS

- Make sure all stairs and steps are protected with a secure banister or handrail on each side that extend the full length of the stairs.
- Keep all porches, stairwells and halls well lit. Light the top and bottom of stairs.
- Keep stairs, steps, landings and all floors clear of clutter and electrical cords.
- Check stairs for worn and loose carpeting or protruding carpet tacks. If your steps have a smooth surface consider installing anti-slip treads to provide safer traction.
- Avoid carrying vision-blocking loads. Keep loads small enough so that you can see where you are stepping and can easily keep one hand free to hold onto the handrail.
- Avoid placing throw rugs at the top or bottom of a stairway. They can slide or curl.
- If you have steps outside your home, keep them free of ice and snow. To prevent a tripping hazard, periodically check steps and walkways for broken or loose bricks, cement or stone.
- In homes with children, make sure that toys and games are not left on steps or landings. When young children are present, use safety gates at the top and bottom of stairs.

GENERAL SAFETY TIPS

- Install nightlights to help light hallways and bathrooms during nighttime hours.
- Use a non-slip mat or have adhesive safety strips or decals installed inside bathtubs and showers.
- Place a bathmat with a non-skid bottom on every bathroom floor.
- Install grab-bars in bath and shower stalls.
- Use throw rugs with non-skid backs or place them over a rug liner.
- Install window guards to prevent young children from falling out of upper windows.
- Use slip resistant footwear.
- Never walk around barefoot. You might stub a toe or step on a sharp object, causing you to lose your balance.
- Avoid wearing only socks, or smooth-soled slippers. Each can slide out from under you on bare floors.

- Follow medication dosages closely. Taking multiple medications and using them incorrectly can cause dizziness, weakness and other side effects that can lead to a dangerous fall.

LADDER SAFETY

- Use a sturdy step stool with handrails when climbing is necessary. Older adults should not use step stools or ladders.
- Place ladder on level ground outdoors. Open it completely, making sure all locks are engaged.
- Always face the ladder when climbing and wear slip-resistant shoes.
- Make sure rungs are dry before using the ladder.
- Stand at or below the highest safe standing level on a ladder. For a stepladder, the safe standing level is the second rung from the top, and for an extension ladder, it is the fourth rung from the top.

According to the Home Safety Council, nearly 150,000 people were treated for home ladder injuries in U.S. emergency departments in 2000.

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