



## Fall Prevention for Older Adults

### United States

- From 2000-2004, falls were the leading cause of nonfatal injuries in every age group except young adults aged 15-24 and were the leading cause of fatal injury among adults 75 and older in the U.S.
- Risk of falls and related injuries increases steadily after 65 years; persons 85 years and older have the highest injury rate.
- Factors contributing to falls include lack of physical health or fitness, effects of medications, walking on uneven surfaces, obstacles in and around the home, lack of rails on stairs, working in elevated areas with unstable equipment, walking on ice, and fear of falling.

### Preventing Falls and Injuries

#### *Physical Health and Fitness*

- Keep fit by being active, walking, and exercising as appropriate, eating a nutritious diet, and avoiding obesity.
- To improve balance problems, have your ears/hearing checked by physician regularly, get physical therapy to improve balance while standing or walking, use a cane or walker, and monitor your blood pressure.
- Take your time while doing tasks (e.g., use caution when getting up from a sitting or lying position, get your balance before walking).
- Have your eyes examined each year and replace glasses as needed.
- Talk to your physician/pharmacist about adverse effects of medications such as dizziness, nausea, or tiredness.
- Avoid alcohol and drug use.

#### *Avoiding Hazards in the Home*

- Make sure every room in your house is well lit.
- Floors should be free of obstacles and have even, non-slip surfaces.
- Remove small carpets and electrical cords from the floor to avoid sliding or tripping.
- Staircases should be well lit, in good repair, have a rail, and be free of clutter.
- In the kitchen, put frequently used items on shelves that can be reached easily without using a step stool.
- Bedrooms
  - Keep the floor clear of small carpets, electrical cords, or other obstacles (books, shoes).
  - Keep a telephone and any walking aids within easy reach.
- Bathrooms
  - Use only non-slip rugs on the floor and mats in the bathtub or shower stall.
  - Install a toilet that has a higher seat and safety rails.
  - Install grab bars around the bathtub. Install a shower stall with grab bars and use a bath bench if you have difficulty climbing in or out of the bathtub.

#### *Avoiding Hazards Outside the Home*

- Keep steps in good repair and install handrails.
- Keep sidewalks clear and in good repair.
- Keep the yard even and free of hoses, gardening materials, and sporting equipment.
- Organize garage and tool shed to be easily accessible and clear of obstacles or debris.
- Keep ice and snow clearing equipment on hand, but don't go out on the ice unless absolutely necessary. Wear appropriate footwear when walking in inclement weather.
- When shopping, attending church, or visiting other homes, use the same safety habits you use at home: wear appropriate shoes, hold onto rails, use caution while walking and climbing stairs, and avoid icy or slippery surfaces.