

Stay active, stay independent

Staying active is one of the most important ways you can stay on your feet and avoid falling.

Many people are afraid of falling, especially if they have fallen before, have fragile bones, or have challenges with their balance or strength.

Think about what you can do to keep your body in good condition and to avoid falls.

You are more likely to fall if you:

- have fallen before
- feel unsteady
- have tripping hazards around you
- have vision problems
- often have trouble thinking clearly
- take medications that make you light-headed, dizzy, sleepy, affect your vision, or affect the way you walk

A fall could be very dangerous if:

- you bleed or bruise easily (e.g. take blood thinner medications)
- you have fragile bones



Facts about falls

- Falls are the leading cause of injury deaths, hospitalizations and disabilities in Canada¹.
- About one in three adults over the age of 65 fall each year².
- Falls can lead to loss of independence or a change in living arrangements³.

See the next page for ideas about how to stay active and stay on your feet.

Preventing a fall

There are many things you can do to avoid falls and stay independent:

1) Exercise and activity programs:

- Choose activities that focus on **muscle strength and balance**: these are the best for helping prevent falls and protect you from injuries
- Choose an activity or program you enjoy and that matches your abilities

2) Check your surroundings and footwear:

- Remove things that might cause a slip or trip in your home (e.g. loose rugs)
- Make sure you have good lighting and secure hand holds (e.g. railings for stairs)
- Wear sturdy shoes that fit well and have a good grip on the soles

3) Talk to your health-care provider about:

- Cutting down or changing medications that could increase your risk for falls
- Ways to keep your bones strong (e.g. foods or vitamins)
- Other ways to prevent falling that are just right for you.

Don't let a fear of falling get in the way of enjoying your life. If you do not feel as strong as you used to or you have stopped an activity, it's time to ask for help.

Getting help

Talk to a nurse or other health-care provider about things you can do to stay active and independent. The best strategy to prevent falls is the one that is **suitable just for you**. Your health-care provider can discuss options with you and share information about programs and services in your area.

References:

1. Parachute. (2015). *The Cost of Injury in Canada*. Parachute: Toronto, ON.
2. Public Health Agency of Canada. (2014). *Seniors Falls in Canada: Second Report*.
3. LHIN Collaborative. (2011). *Integrated Provincial Falls Prevention Framework and Toolkit*. Toronto, ON: Queens Printer.

This fact sheet was developed to go with the RNAO best practice guideline (BPG) *Preventing Falls and Reducing Injury from Falls* (2017). It is intended to increase your knowledge, and help you take part in decisions about your health or the health of a family member. RNAO's BPGs are available for public viewing and free download at RNAO.ca/bestpractices