



# Prevent Falls!

Safety Advice for Patients and Their Families



## What is a fall?

- You lose your balance and suddenly collapse on the floor or on the ground.
- You may or may not be injured.

**The risk of falling increases with age.**

**Falls occur for a number of reasons (risk factors):**

- State of health;
- Strength, balance, and coordination;
- Vision and hearing;
- Physical activity;
- Sleep;
- Environment;
- Medications.

## Falls are avoidable.

By staying in good shape,  
you reduce your risk of falling.



## **H** In hospital

Falls often occur due to weakness, dizziness, or tripping.

Patients fall most often in their room or bathroom.

### **The risk is higher when you:**

- Are getting in or out of bed;
- Are sitting down onto, or getting up from, the toilet;
- Are reaching out to grab something that's too far away;
- Are bending down to pick something up and lose your balance;
- Are leaning on a movable object such as a bedside table;
- Slip on a wet floor;
- Wear shoes that are not safe.

### **What can you do to prevent a fall?**

- Turn the light on before you get out of bed.
- Wear your glasses.
- If you're feeling weak or dizzy, ask for help.
- Avoid getting out of bed too quickly.
- Sit on the edge of the bed and count to 10 before you stand up.
- If you feel weak or dizzy after taking your medications, speak to your nurse, pharmacist, or doctor.
- Wear clothing that does not drag on the floor and that cannot get caught on furniture or equipment (chair, wheelchair, walker, etc.).
- Wear properly fitting shoes. These should support your heels, have laces or Velcro, have a non-slip sole, and have a heel that is at least one inch wide.
- If you spill or drop something on the floor, inform the staff.



## At home

- Avoid having mats around. If there are mats in your home, make sure they are solidly attached to the floor.
- Have good lighting, especially on stairs, in hallways, and in the bathroom. Use nightlights.
- If the floor is wet, dry it off.
- Make sure that hallways are always free of obstacles.
- Repair any broken items that could pose a risk to your safety.
- Take care with house pets (cat, dog, etc.), which can cause falls.
- Remove all electrical and telephone cords or attach them in a safe location.

### Have a healthy lifestyle.

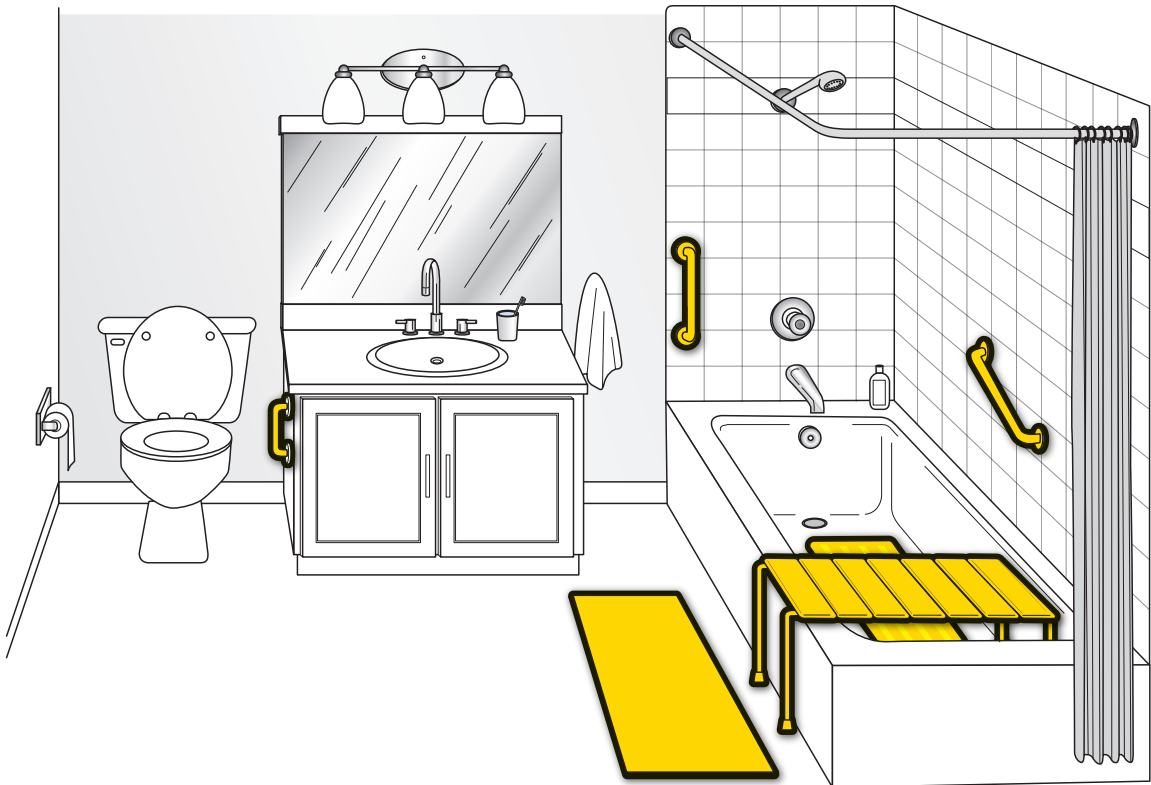
- Plan your meals based on *Canada's Food Guide*.
- If your health allows, drink lots of water.
- Be active and do exercise to increase your strength and flexibility.

### Avoid taking unnecessary risks.

- Look where you're going and walk slowly.
- Ask for help when carrying or moving heavy objects.
- Get up slowly.
- Wear well-made shoes. In the winter, put crampons (ice cleats) under your boots and an ice pick on the bottom of your cane.
- Make sure that your assistive devices (walker, raised toilet seat, etc.) are in good condition.
- See your doctor and optometrist regularly.

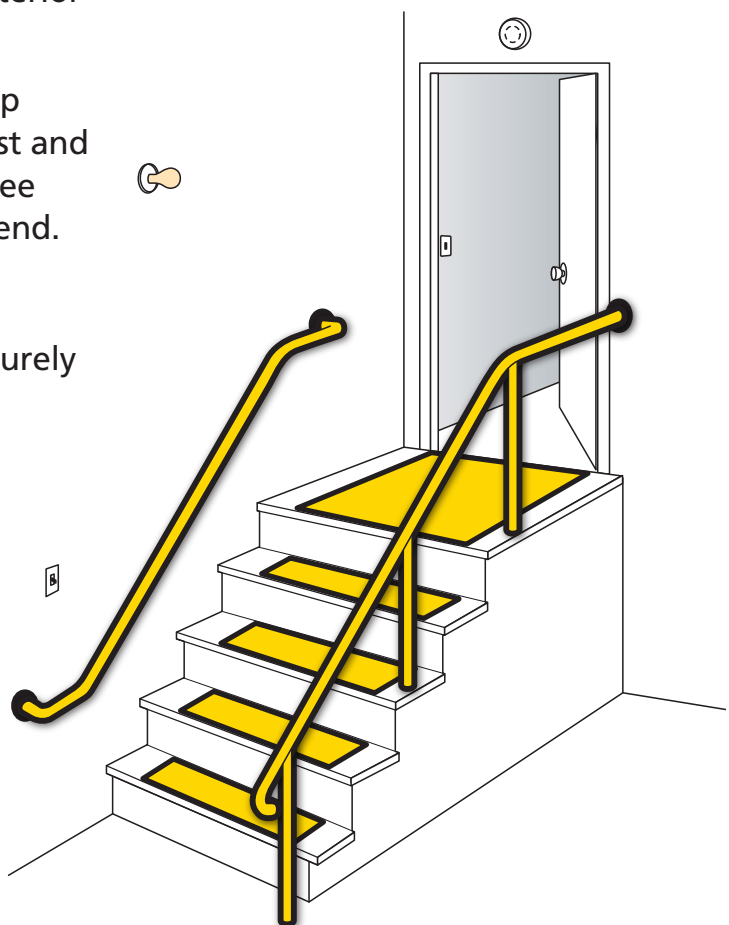
## Bathroom

- Place a nonslip mat in your bathtub/shower and another one where you step out of the bath.
- Install grab bars near the toilet and bath/shower to help you sit down and stand up. Make sure they are well anchored.
- Use a raised toilet seat and a bath/shower seat if necessary.



## Stairs

- The handrail must be solid and longer than the stairs.
- Put a nonslip finish, adhesive strips, or paint containing sand on interior and exterior stairs.
- In the winter, put salt on exterior stairs to de-ice them.
- Put brightly coloured nonslip strips on the edge of the first and last stairs so you can easily see where the stairs begin and end.
- Always hold the handrail.
- Carpet on stairs must be securely fastened.





## Bedroom

- The bed height should be adjusted to match your knee height, if possible, and the mattress must be firm.
- Sit on a chair to get dressed.
- Rails can be attached to your bed at home.

## Living room

- Use a chair that is the right height, not too deep, and with arms to help you sit down and get up without difficulty.
- Get up from the chair slowly.
- Do not place tables in the middle of the living room.

## Kitchen

- Avoid climbing up, reaching out, or bending down to grab things. Place frequently used items on shelves you can reach easily.
- If you have to climb up to get something, use a stepladder that is solid and in good condition.

## What can you do if you fall?



**1** Sit on the floor.



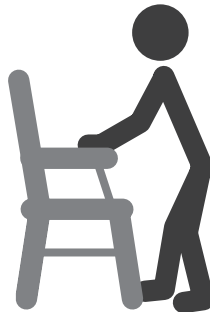
**2** Turn over with your weight on your arms and legs.



**3** Put your hands on the chair for support.



**4** Put your arms on the chair and one foot firmly on the floor.



**5** Lean forward and lift yourself up by pushing with your other foot.



**6** Sit down, rest, and notify someone that you fell.

## If you are injured...

- Don't try to get up.
- Crawl to the telephone and call 911 for help.