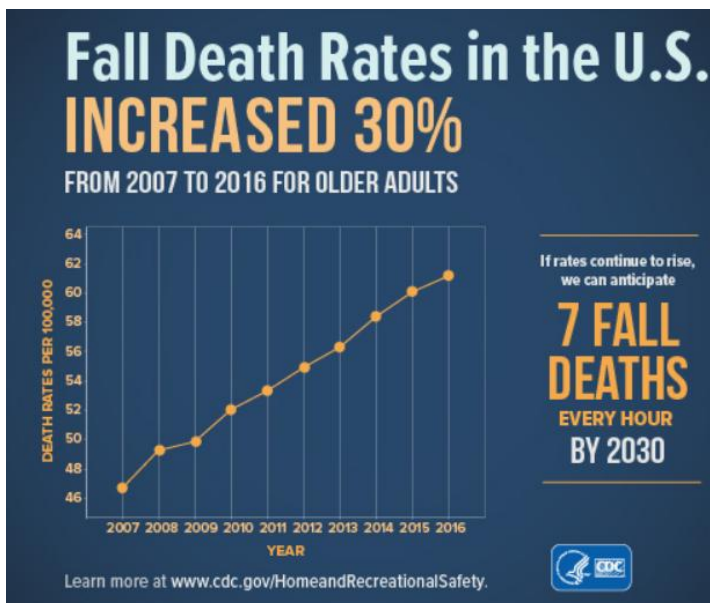


## Home and Recreational Safety:

### Information for you, your parents and for those concerned about home safety.

Falls are a threat to the health of older adults and can reduce their ability to remain independent. However, falls aren't something that just happens when you age, there are proven ways to reduce falls.

As can be seen, fall death rates are on the increase and it's important to know how you can reduce the dangers in creating a situation where falls could occur.



One out of five falls causes a serious injury such as broken bones or a head injury.<sup>4,5</sup>

- Each year, 3 million older people are treated in emergency departments for fall injuries.<sup>6</sup>
  - Over 800,000 patients a year are hospitalized because of a fall injury, most often because of a head injury or hip fracture.<sup>6</sup>
  - Each year at least 300,000 older people are hospitalized for hip fractures.<sup>7</sup>
  - More than 95% of hip fractures are caused by falling,<sup>8</sup> usually by falling sideways.<sup>9</sup>
- Falls are the most common cause of traumatic brain injuries (TBI).<sup>10</sup>
  - In 2015, the total medical costs for falls totaled more than \$50 billion.<sup>11</sup> Medicare and Medicaid shouldered 75% of these costs.

## What Conditions Make You More Likely to Fall?

Research has identified many conditions that contribute to falling. These are called risk factors. Many risk factors can be changed or modified to help prevent falls. They include:

- Lower body weakness
- Vitamin D deficiency (that is, not enough vitamin D in your system)
- Difficulties with walking and balance
- Use of medicines, such as tranquilizers, sedatives, or antidepressants. Even some over-the-counter medicines can affect balance and how steady you are on your feet.
- Vision problems
- Foot pain or poor footwear

- Home hazards or dangers such as
  - broken or uneven steps, and
  - throw rugs or clutter that can be tripped over.

## What You Can Do to Prevent Falls

Falls can be prevented. These are some simple things you can do to keep yourself from falling.



### *Talk to Your Doctor*

- Ask your doctor or healthcare provider to **evaluate your risk** for falling and talk with them about specific things you can do.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist to **review your medicines** to see if any might make you dizzy or sleepy. This should include prescription medicines and over-the-counter medicines.
- Ask your doctor or healthcare provider about taking **vitamin D** supplements.



### *Do Strength and Balance Exercises*

Do exercises that make your legs stronger and improve your balance. Tai Chi is a good example of this kind of exercise.



### *Have Your Eyes Checked*

Have your eyes checked by an eye doctor at least once a year, and be sure to update your eyeglasses if needed.

If you have bifocal or progressive lenses, you may want to get a pair of glasses with only your distance prescription for outdoor activities, such as walking. Sometimes these types of lenses can make things seem closer or farther away than they really are.



### *Make Your Home Safer*

- Get rid of things you could trip over.
- Add grab bars inside and outside your tub or shower and next to the toilet.
- Put railings on both sides of stairs.
- Make sure your home has lots of light by adding more or brighter light bulbs.

### Additional Resources



For more information about how you can prevent falls, check out some of our online [STEADI resources](#) for older adults.

These resources include:

- [Stay Independent brochure](#)
- [What You Can Do to Prevent Falls brochure](#)
- [Check for Safety brochure](#)
- [Postural Hypotension brochure](#)
- [Chair Rise Exercise](#)

