Fall Prevention in the Home

Falls are a leading cause of injury and death in the home, especially for older adults. Most falls can be avoided by using the following tips:

1. Make your home safe

   **In the bathroom**
   - Install grab bars in the tub and around the toilet
   - Use a non-skid shower mat
   - Use a hand held shower head
   - Install a raised toilet seat
   - Use a shower bench to sit while showering and drying
   - In a sitting position, dry your feet before getting out of the tub or shower
   - Sit to shave, apply makeup or fix your hair
   - Use a urinal or bedside commode if you have problems with urination or diarrhea that cause you to rush

   **In the living room**
   - No throw rugs or area rugs
   - Remove cords and clutter from walkways
   - Use furniture with firm cushions and arms to help you get up safely
   - Make walkways wider

   **In the bedroom**
   - No throw rugs or area rugs
   - Turn on the light before getting out of bed in the dark
   - Sit for a minute at the edge of the bed before getting up
   - Sit while dressing
   - Use equipment to help with dressing
   - Make sure bed covers do not drag on the floor

   **In the kitchen**
   - Put commonly used items in easy to reach places
   - Slide heavy objects along counter top to avoid carrying
   - Use a cart to move heavy items
   - Use kitchen chairs that don’t have wheels
   - No throw rugs
   - Use a kitchen timer to avoid unnecessary trips to check food

   **Stairs**
   - Use handrails; install handrails on both sides if possible
   - Install light switch at the top and bottom of the staircase
   - Place bright colored tape at the edge of each step
   - Install a non-skid surface on each step
   - Remove all clutter
Lighting
• Use night lights
• Make sure a light switch is at the entry of every room
• Use an automatic light timer to avoid walking into a dark house
• Try to use glare-free light bulbs

Outdoors and entries
• Walkways are free of clutter
• Walkways and entrances are well lit and salted during ice/snow
• Steps have railings and lighting
• Consider motion sensors

2. Take your medication
Be sure to take medications as instructed by your doctor or pharmacist.
• Keep a current list of all medications with you at all times
• Ask your doctor to review the list at every visit
• Know the purpose and possible side effects of medications
• Some medications can make you dizzy or lose your balance

3. Stay active
Staying active is one of the most important ways to stay strong, keep your balance and lower your chances of falling.
• Lack of exercise can lead to weakness and problems with walking
• Use shoes that fit well and have non-slip soles
• Use a cane or walker as instructed by a therapist
• Be careful of ice and bad weather

4. Other hints
• See your doctor if you fall or feel unsteady when you walk.
  The doctor may recommend physical therapy to help prevent falls.
• Be sure your clothing fits well and does not cause you to trip
• Be sure to wear your glasses
• Have your eyes checked regularly
• Drinking alcohol may make your balance worse
• Increase the number of phones in the house
• Keep a cordless phone with you
• Do not rush
• Never use a chair as a step stool
• Clean up spills
• Carry small, light loads
• Consider a Lifeline® or other emergency alert system
Floor Transfer Instructions

If the person is injured or not able to talk or respond to you, call 911 for emergency help.

If the person is alert, unhurt and fairly strong, use this method:

1. Roll onto side.

2. Push with upper arm in order to prop on elbow.

3. Pause and rest if needed.

4. Continue to push up until sitting.

5. Begin to twist around to get on hands and knees.

6. Once on hands and knees, crawl toward a sturdy piece of furniture.

Continued
7. Raise onto knees by propping hands on chair.

8. Work to get a knee up with the foot flat on the floor.

9. Push up to get both feet on the floor.

10. Carefully begin to turn in order to sit on the chair. **Hold onto the chair at all times.**

11. Slowly lower yourself down into sitting.
Car Transfer

You may find everyday tasks, such as getting in and out of a car, to be a little harder after your surgery. By planning ahead and being prepared, you may be able to manage these tasks better. The following may be helpful.

**Preparation tips for caregivers**
- Place firm pillow on seat to make it higher.
- Use a slick pillow cover or a garbage bag to make sliding easier.
- Park away from curb.
- Move seat back and recline.
- Stand by to assist.

**Getting into car**
- Back up to car
- **Tuck head down** and place hand on back of car seat for support while sitting down.
- Use only unaffected leg to push up and back onto seat.
- Caregiver assists as needed.
- Slowly swivel around. **TIP:** Wear smooth clothing to make this easier.
- Once sitting place a pillow between knees.
- Fasten seat belt and keep back reclined.

**Special precautions**
- Keep legs apart.
- Avoid twisting affected leg.
- Follow hip precautions if needed.
Use of a Transfer Belt

Gait belts are a safety device used to transfer a patient from one place to another or to be used when walking a patient.

**HOW TO FASTEN THE GAIT BELT PROPERLY**

Place the belt with the buckle in front of the person’s mid section, tooth side facing outward.

Feed the metal tipped end of the belt through the tooth end of the buckle and pull until snug so the teeth can secure it. (Picture A)

Feed the remainder of the metal tipped end through the hole portion of the buckle. (Picture B)

Tighten the gait belt until it is snug. It should not be uncomfortable. (Picture C)

*If the person has an abdominal wound, feeding tube, or colostomy bag, check with your rehab provider for instructions.*

**GAIT BELT USE**

Hold onto the belt at all times while assisting the person to move from one place to the next or when walking with the person.

Place your hand or hands under the belt palm side in using a firm grasp. Stand behind and to the side of the person. (Picture D)

*Check with your rehab provider regarding specific instructions on walking or moving someone.*
Wheelchair Transfer Instructions

A. 1. Place wheelchair at 45 degree angle to the chair or bed.
2. Position wheelchair so you can transfer toward your strong side.
3. Move foot rests out of way.
4. **Lock the brakes.**

B. 1. Scoot to the edge of the chair.
2. Push on armrests of the chair or on the bed and stand up.

C. 1. Reach with strong arm for chair or bed you are moving toward.
2. Step with your strong leg at the same time.

D. 1. Line yourself up with the bed or chair.
2. Hold on to armrest or reach for bed.
3. Sit down slowly.
Walker Safety with Daily Activities

1. To push up to a standing position, place hands on bed or arm rest of chair. **Do not** pull on walker, as it can tip over.

2. When sitting down on chair, bed or any other surface:
   - Look for the surface so that you can position yourself
   - Turn completely so that you can back into the surface, feeling it with your legs
   - Reach back for the surface prior to sitting

3. Always stand to the **side** of lower cupboards or oven door when reaching in or out.

4. Always keep walker facing the cupboard (or table, etc.), when sliding objects across it.

5. Avoid over-reaching, which may result in loss of balance.

6. Whenever one hand comes off the walker (i.e., to place something into oven or reach into cupboard), the other hand must be on something stable, such as a countertop or table.

7. If no counter is available, one hand may be placed in **center** of walker.

8. Objects should be carried in a walker bag, not in the hand.

9. Keep both hands on walker at all times when walking.