

Pacific Regional Centre for Healthy Aging

[Preventing Falls](#)

[10 Tips](#)

[If Someone Falls](#)

[Statistics](#)

[Resources](#)

Preventing Falls

If you are reading this, congratulations! You are doing one of the best things you can do to stay healthy and independent as you age, or to help a loved one do so: you're learning how to prevent falls. Falls are the leading cause of injury among older Canadians.

Luckily, there are ways to prevent falls and to make them less harmful when they happen. [Statistics on fall prevention programs](#) show they decrease falls by up to 55%

Taking a program is only one of many actions you can take. Read on for quick tips and links to trustworthy sources of information and support.

Things You Should Know About Preventing Falls

Fall prevention is about more than railings and grab bars. Fall prevention works best as a holistic, long-term approach. It involves many parts of our lives, from what we eat to how we spend our free time.

In some cases, people have medical conditions (like postural hypotension or a vestibular condition) that need medical treatment. In other cases, a physiotherapist, occupational therapist, eye doctor, or other health care provider provides the best support.

The best time to learn about fall prevention is *before* you have a fall. Of course, a fall is a clear signal that you should take action. A previous fall is the #1 indicator of fall risk. But ideally, fall prevention is, well, prevention. Read on for tips and resources.

If an older person is injured in a fall, they can fully recover. By taking the steps suggested on this page and working with health care providers after a fall, you can bounce back. Putting in this effort can be life changing. Many people who fall become afraid of falling again and cut down on their everyday activities. Then, because they are less active, they become weaker, and this increases their chances of falling.

10 Ways to Prevent Falls

1. Socialize

Staying socially active is not directly linked to fall prevention, but it's indirectly linked in big ways! Being social supports motor skills, clear thinking, and emotional health, and independence. All these prevent falls. In fact, research shows that **our social interaction** is our biggest predictor of mortality!

2. Be physically active

Choose activities that focus on strength, endurance, and balance. This will keep you agile. You will find it easier to avoid dangerous moments or to react quickly when they happen. Also, exercise helps keep our brains healthy. Learn more about staying active [here](#).

3. Get a good sleep

If you are tired, you are more likely to fall, and more likely to get severely injured if that happens. Learn how to improve sleep [here](#).

4. Take care of vision and hearing

If you can't see well, you're more likely to fall. Get your eyes checked annually and wear your glasses when you need them. Hearing is also important because it supports brain health, social activity, and ability to function independently. All these are linked to fall reduction. Get your ears checked and wear hearing aids if needed.

5. Get your medications checked

Talk to your doctor and/or pharmacist to see if any of your medications increase the risk of falls. Also, take extra care if you are on a lot of medications. Anyone taking more than four medications is at increased risk of falling.

6. Fall-proof your home

50% of falls for older adults happen at home, mainly in the bathroom and on stairs. These can often be prevented. Lighting, reduced clutter, grab bars, bath seats, railings, and clear floors make a huge difference.

Learn more and take action with [this fact-sheet](#) and this [on-line guide](#) about preventing falls.

7. Find and use the right walking aid if needed

Sometimes, aging adults resist using a cane, walker, or other aid because of pride, or they believe it signals "the beginning of the end." But using these devices actually improves health and help people remain social, active, and independent.

Ask a health care provider for advice about what's best for you. Also, ask about loan programs so you can try something out before committing. And once you find the right aid, use it! Getting used to new habits can take a few weeks, but eventually it will feel natural.

Learn about finding the right walking aid and other assistive devices, as well as sources of financial support, in [this fact-sheet](#). Find more information on financial support [here](#).

8. Take a fall prevention class

Studies show that fall prevention programs decrease fall risk by as much as 55%.

To find a class, check with local community centres, seniors' centres, or your medical clinic, and see the [Resources](#) section for a link to Osteofit Fall Prevention Classes.

9. Get the right equipment

Falls happen more often when people go barefoot, or when shoes don't fit well, so get yourself good shoes for indoors and outdoors. Also, invest in tools that can make your life safer, such as reachers, anti-skid soles, shower chairs, hip protectors.

Learn more in this [fact-sheet about assistive devices](#). Find out about sources of funding for equipment, including walking aids, [here](#).

10. Eat well

Nutritious meals keep up strength, resistance, and balance. [Vitamin D](#) is important for strong bones—read this [fact sheet](#) and/or ask your doctor or a dietitian for recommendations for supplements. Also, don't skip meals—it can make you weak and dizzy. Finally, drink lots of fluids, ideally water, and avoid alcohol.

If You Fall or Witness a Fall

Everyone should know [what to do if they fall or witness a fall](#). The response will be different depending on whether the person can get up or not.

Caregivers and family members should know how to assess the situation, safely help someone up if that's appropriate, and provide care. Older adults should practice getting up safely so that they can manage more easily if a fall happens.

As well, you will have decisions to make after a fall: call 911, have someone drive you to emergency, make a doctor's appointment, or wait and see. You'll want to consider the psychological impacts as well as physical ones, and of course, think about preventing falls in the future.

Learn more with this [illustrated info-sheet on preventing and responding to falls](#) from the Public Health Agency of Canada.

Falls by the Numbers

- Falls are the leading cause of injury among older Canadians
- The financial cost of seniors' injury in Canada is estimated at \$2 billion per year
- Falls are associated with over 1/3 of admissions to long-term care facilities after leaving the hospital
- Injuries due to falls rose 43% between 2003 and 2008
- Deaths due to falls rose 65% between 2003 and 2008

Resources

Websites

[HealthLinkBC: Preventing Falls](#)

Clear information and links to more resources.

[The Safe Living Guide—A Guide to Home Safety for Seniors](#) Read the website or order the booklet to get more in-depth advice on making your home safe, healthy eating, activity, medication, safety aids, and more.

[Avoiding Falls](#) A comprehensive collection of information and further resources from the Canadian Frailty Network.

[Finding Balance](#) is an organization devoted to preventing falls. Their website is full of videos, factsheets, activity programs, and more.

Phone Support

811 BC

This will connect you to [HealthLinkBC's health service navigators](#). They can

- Answer basic health care questions
- Help you find your way around the health care system
- Connect with a registered nurse, registered dietitian, qualified exercise professional, or pharmacist

Call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for the deaf and hard of hearing)

Health advice and information

24 hours a day, seven days a week

Translation services are available in over 130 languages

For non-emergency situations only

Booklets and Factsheets

[You CAN Prevent Falls](#) A brief but complete online pamphlet covering the basics, including tips how to make your home safer.

[Guide to assistive devices](#) Four pages provide the info you need on gadgets such as walkers, canes, home equipment such as shower seats, grab bars, easy grip utensils for cooking and eating, loud-ring telephones, and more.

[The Safe Living Guide—A Guide to Home Safety for Seniors](#) Read the website or order the booklet to get more in-depth advice on making your home safe, healthy eating, activity, medication, safety aids, and more.

Programs, classes, community resources

[Osteofit and Get Up and Go classes](#) Fall prevention classes offered in various community and recreation centres in B.C.

Find out about [programs to help fund assistive devices](#) like walking aids and home equipment

Quizzes

Take this quick [10-question quiz to assess your risk](#) of falling.