

GUIDE



Staying Independent: Check Your Fall Risk!



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Regional Geriatric Program
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Disclaimer

This is general information developed by The Ottawa Hospital. It is not intended to replace the advice of a qualified health-care provider. Please consult your health-care provider who will be able to determine the appropriateness of the information for your specific situation.

This document was developed by the VA Greater Los Angeles Geriatric Research Education and Clinical Center and affiliates and includes a validated fall risk self-assessment tool (Rubenstein et al. J Safety Res; 2011; 42(6) 493 – 499). Adapted with permission of the authors.

Health, Safety and Fitness Fight Falls!

Did You Know?

- **One in three seniors** will fall at least once every year.
- Injuries from a fall are the main type of all injuries for seniors.
- **Anyone** can fall! Fall risk increases with age, especially over 80 years.
- However, almost half of falls that need to be admitted to a hospital are among those aged 65 and older.
- Falls usually happen in or around the home.
- The stairs and bathroom may be dangerous.
- The reasons for a fall are usually more than one. Examples: previous fall; poor balance; changes in walking ability; decreased muscle strength; new medications; changes in your memory; poor or changing health; decreased nutrition, vision or hearing.

Complete the **Staying Independent** checklist on the next pages. Discuss any concerns with your Family Physician.

If we can be of assistance during your visit please let us know!

Falls are the main reason why older adults lose their independence. Are you at risk?

Please Check **Yes** or **No** for each statement below.

Yes	No	Check Your Risk for Falling
(2)		<p>I have fallen in the last 6 months.</p> <p><i>Actions to staying independent:</i> Learn more on how to reduce your fall risk, as people who have fallen are more likely to fall again.</p>
(2)		<p>I use or have been advised to use a cane or walker to get around safely.</p> <p><i>Actions to staying independent:</i> Talk with a physiotherapist about the most appropriate walking aid for your needs.</p>
(1)		<p>Sometimes, I feel unsteady when I am walking.</p> <p><i>Actions to staying independent:</i> Exercise to build up your strength and improve your balance, as this is shown to reduce the risk for falls.</p>
(1)		<p>I steady myself by holding onto furniture when walking at home.</p> <p><i>Actions to staying independent:</i> Incorporate daily balance exercises and reduce home hazards that might cause a trip or slip.</p>
(1)		<p>I am worried about falling.</p> <p><i>Actions to staying independent:</i> Knowing how to prevent a fall can reduce fear and promote active living.</p>

Yes	No	Check Your Risk for Falling
(1)		<p>I need to push with my hands to stand up from a chair.</p> <p><i>Actions to staying independent:</i> Strengthening your muscles can reduce your risk of falling and being injured.</p>
(1)		<p>I have some trouble stepping up onto a curb.</p> <p><i>Actions to staying independent:</i> Daily exercise can help improve your strength and balance.</p>
(1)		<p>I often have to rush to the toilet.</p> <p><i>Actions to staying independent:</i> Talk with your doctor or incontinence specialist about solutions to decrease the need to rush to the toilet.</p>
(1)		<p>I have lost some feeling in my feet.</p> <p><i>Actions to staying independent:</i> Talk with your doctor or podiatrist, as numbness in the feet can cause stumbles and falls.</p>
(1)		<p>I take medicine that sometime makes me feel light-headed or more tired than usual.</p> <p><i>Actions to staying independent:</i> Talk with your doctor or pharmacist about medication side effects that may increase the risk of falls.</p>
(1)		<p>I take medicine to help me sleep or improve my mood.</p> <p><i>Actions to staying independent:</i> Talk with your doctor or pharmacist about safer alternatives for a good night's sleep.</p>

Yes	No	Check Your Risk for Falling
(1)		<p>I often feel sad or depressed.</p> <p><i>Actions to staying independent:</i> Talk with your doctor about symptoms of depression, and help with finding positive solutions.</p>
Total		<p>Add up the number of points in parentheses for each yes response. If you scored 4 points or more, you may be at risk for falling.</p> <p>Discuss this brochure with your doctor to find ways to reduce your risk.</p>

*The above checklist was developed by the Greater Los Angeles VA Geriatric Research Education Clinical Center and affiliates and is a validated fall risk self-assessment tool (Vivrette, Rubenstein, Martin, Josephson & Kramer, 2011). This brochure is adapted with the permission of J.Stevens, R.Vivrette, J.Kramer, & L. Rubenstein.

Actions to Staying Independent

To help you stay independent and prevent falls:

Your doctor may ask you about:

- previous falls
- if you feel unsteady when you stand or walk
- how you manage your daily activities
- if you are worried about falling

Your doctor may assess your:

- medications and calcium and vitamin D
- general health
- blood pressure, heart rate and rhythm
- muscle strength
- feet and footwear
- incontinence
- vision
- mobility and balance



Ask your doctor for information about:

- fall prevention clinics and/or community programs
- physical or occupational therapy
- dietitian consultation
- social worker and/or home support services

“Staying active keeps me connected with my community and helps me to continue to do the things I enjoy.”



“I want to live in my home as long as possible. I use a walker so that I can get around safely and keep my legs strong.”

Protect yourself! Stay Active, Stay Safe!

- Ask your doctor about your bone health and to review your medicines.
- Get annual eye check-ups and update your eyeglasses.
- Begin an exercise program and try to get 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per week.
- Complete a home safety checklist annually.
- Complete muscle and bone strengthening activities at least 2 days per week.
- Eat 3 or more servings of calcium rich food daily.
- Take a daily vitamin D supplement 400 IU age 50 and 800 IU for age 75.

For more resources and information, please visit:

- Regional Geriatric Services:
www.rgpeo.com/en/patients-and-families.aspx
- Champlain LHIN physical activity resource list:
www.ottawaheart.ca/content_documents/Community-Resources-2011-03-21.pdf
- Champlain Region Health Services:
www.champlainhealthline.ca

References

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2. Rubenstein et al., (2011). Stay Independent. Are you at Risk? *Journal of Safety Research* 42(6). Used with permission of the authors.
3. Vivrette, R.L., Rubenstein, L.Z., Martin, J.L., Josephson, K.R. and Kramer, B.J. Development of a fall-risk self-assessment for community-dwelling seniors. *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity*, 19(1), 16–29.
4. The Public Health Agency of Canada. (2006). Seniors and Aging: Preventing Falls in and Around Your Home:
www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/alt_formats/pacrb-dgapcr/pdf/iyh-vsv/life-vie/fp-pc-eng.pdf.
5. Registered Nurses Associations of Ontario. (2010 & 2013). Safer Healthcare Now: Reducing Falls and Injuries From Falls. Getting Started Kit. www.saferhealthcarenow.ca.
6. Local Health Integrated Network. (2011). Integrated Provincial Falls Prevention Framework & Toolkit. Queen's Printer, Ontario.