

## **Staying steady: How to reduce fall risks at home and beyond**

November is Fall Prevention Month.

As we approach slippery winter weather it is the ideal time to make some changes that can improve your balance and reduce the risk of a fall related injury.

Below are some tips to create a safer environment in your home and beyond.

### **Home safety modifications**

About half of falls happen in the bathroom or on the stairs<sup>1</sup>. Make sure these areas are free from tripping hazards by removing any clutter, wiping up any spills, using a night light, and using rubber backed mats.

In other areas of the home, move furniture so that light switches are easily accessible, move wires behind furniture, and make space so you can move around the room with any mobility aids.

### **Footwear and mobility aids**

Choose well-fitted shoes with good ankle support and grip. If you have mobility aids, such as a walker or wheelchair, use them according to the manufacturer instructions and ensure they are fitted properly.

### **Medication, vision & hearing**

Take your medication as prescribed. Your doctor or pharmacist can review your medications, supplements, vitamins and over-the-counter medications to ensure you are taking what is best for you. Use a plastic pill sorter, or ask your pharmacist about blister packs, to separate medications that should be taken at breakfast, lunch, dinner, and bedtime.

If you are experiencing any side effects from your medications be sure you tell your doctor or pharmacist.

Have your eyes and ears checked annually to monitor any changes. It is also best to avoid alcohol and cannabis as these may cause you to feel unsteady, could interact with your medications and could increase your risk of falling.

### **Outdoor safety tips**

Take your time. Often falls happen because we are rushing to get somewhere. It is also important to say something if you see a tripping hazard, like a fallen branch or uneven sidewalk surface while out in your community.

### **When to seek professional advice if:**

- you have fallen before
- you want to have a home safety assessment
- you want a referral to occupational or physical therapy.