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Healthy Insights

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Fall Prevention

As you age, the risk of serious falls and injuries rises. A fall could alter your quality of life significantly, leading to broken bones, head injury, and sometimes even death. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that about 36 million falls occur each year in older adults. Taking steps to prevent falls can ensure that you don't become one of those statistics.

Don't Stop Moving

Staying active gives you a better chance of avoiding injury. You can remain active by planning an exercise routine, which could consist of anything from swimming, doing yoga/Pilates, walking briskly around the neighborhood, or lifting light weights. If working out alone isn't your style, try group classes at your local gym or community/senior center. Exercising frequently keeps your bones strong and your tendons and ligaments flexible. Strive to stay active for at least 150 minutes per week. Consult your doctor for advice and guidance on creating an exercise plan.

Get Enough Rest

Make sure to get enough rest, as this will decrease the likelihood of a fall. To get good sleep, create a consistent bedtime schedule. You should follow a routine of relaxing activities before you head to bed. Stay away from electronic devices before you sleep; opt for a



calming book or audiobook, a guided meditation, or soothing music instead.

Create a Solid Foundation

The most important part of your body to focus on when preventing falls is your feet. With a good foundation, you will be able to walk with confidence knowing that you've decreased your chances of a bad fall. Invest in a good pair of rubber-soled, lace-up shoes that have a low heel. Be sure to always wear shoes, especially when you're walking on stairs and slippery floors.

Fall-Proof Your Space

Look around your home for any potential tripping hazards. Is there any clutter on the floor that can be stored away? Are there any loose wires that could be placed by the wall? Walk around your home and note anything that could cause a fall. Store away small area rugs. Tape cables and wires onto the corner of the wall. Keep your house clean and tidy by throwing away or recycling waste or packaging. Often, trips are a result of bad lighting in the living space, so make sure that your home is well lit.

Prevent Slips

Wet or icy surfaces could also contribute to falls. If a liquid spill has occurred in the home, be sure to clean it up as quickly as possible to the best of your ability. If you're unable to clean up the spill right away, place a towel over the area to soak it up. If your driveway, front door, or entrance is especially icy in the winter, always make sure to spread salt or sand to make it less slippery.

Get Tested

Have your hearing and eyesight tested frequently to make sure that there are no changes in your senses. Changes in these functions could put you at greater risk for a fall. If you get new eyeglasses or contact lenses, be sure to take the time to adapt to them. Make sure your hearing aid fits properly to your ear. Always wear your glasses, contacts, or hearing aid when walking around the house.

Use Assistive Devices

Assistive devices could help prevent dangerous falls. Using canes and walkers can help you navigate unknown areas and uneven terrain. Be sure to consult your doctor or physical therapist about the best device option for you.

Pay Attention to Your Medication

Make sure you take all your prescribed medications and review your medications with your provider at each visit. Some medicines could increase your chances of falling due to side effects such as dizziness or sleepiness. If your medications carry this risk, discuss with your

doctor whether there might be a safer alternative or if you can try a lower dose. Never make a change to your medicines without speaking with your doctor first.

Notify Your Doctor

Always make sure to tell your doctor about a fall so they can help you set up a prevention plan that is tailored to your needs. Keeping your doctor in the loop can alert them to new medical problems that may be developing.

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IPRO Healthy Insights is authored by Dr. Clare Bradley, IPRO's Senior Vice President/Chief Medical Officer, a nationally recognized public health advocate.

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