

Preventing Falls



**BlueCross
BlueShield**

Federal Employee Program.

Tips for preventing falls

You can lower your chances of falling. Protect yourself, be careful and stay independent.

Why is falling a problem?

One out of five people who fall have moderate to severe injuries such as hip fractures or head traumas. In fact, falls are the most common cause of traumatic brain injuries. Most fractures among older adults are caused by falls and result in pelvis, upper arm and hand injuries. Even a minor fall can result in bruises, cuts or sprains. Falling once can increase the chance of another fall.

Some things you can do to help prevent falls include:

- Exercising
- Managing your medications
- Checking your vision regularly

- Improving household lighting
- Reducing potential hazards around the house

What role does exercise play in preventing falls?

Exercise is one of the best things you can do to lower your risk of falling. Plus, it helps you feel better both physically and mentally. Consider exercises that improve your balance like Tai Chi. Walking is also an easy, convenient and affordable exercise. Be sure to check with your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.

How can I manage my medicine to prevent falls?

Some medications could increase your risk of falls by making you feel weak or dizzy. Have your doctor or pharmacist review all of your medicines, including your over-the-counter medicines, prescriptions, vitamins, and supplements. Your doctor and pharmacist can help make sure you are doing all that you can to keep your bones strong and prevent a broken bone if you do fall.

Patient-Centered Care is a medication-therapy management service available for Blue Cross and Blue Shield Service Benefit Plan members and is here to help. Call your Patient-Centered Care pharmacist at 1-866-465-2505 to review your medicines and any questions.

How often should I get my vision checked?

Poor vision increases your chance of falling. Have your vision checked at least once a year.

If you wear bifocals or trifocals be careful when going up and down stairs or when walking on uneven surfaces.

What should I look for in lighting?

As you get older, you need brighter lighting to see well. Add lighting to dark areas and make the lighting even in all areas of your home. If areas are too bright, add a lightweight curtain or shade over the window to reduce glare. Other lighting tips include:

- Placing a lamp close to your bed where it is easy to reach
- Adding night lights along your path to the bathroom and kitchen
- Keeping a flashlight and extra batteries by your bed and other easy-to-find places in case of a power outage

Fall hazards at home

Where should I look for hazards in my home?

Falls can happen any time and any place,



including in the home during everyday activities. Some areas in your house to check for potential fall hazards include:

Floors

- Repair loose, wooden floorboards and carpeting right away. Keep floor surfaces smooth, but not slippery
- Remove throw rugs or use double-sided tape to keep the rugs from slipping
- Remove things you can trip over (like papers, books, loose cords, clothes and shoes) from places where you walk

Stairs

- Make sure your staircase is well lit and the handrails are secured on both sides

Bathroom

- Install grab bars next to your toilet. A raised toilet seat or one with armrests can also be helpful
- Use non-slip mats in the bathtub and on shower floors
- Install grab bars inside and outside of the tub or shower. Place a sturdy plastic seat in your shower or tub so that you can sit down if needed
- Consider buying a hand-held shower nozzle so that you can shower sitting down

Kitchen

- Wipe up spills off the floor right away
- Keep commonly used items in easy-to-reach cabinets.
- If using a step stool for hard-to-reach places, use a sturdy one with a handrail and wide steps

Shoes

- Wear shoes both inside and outside the house
- Avoid going barefoot, wearing slippers or walking in stockings
- Wear proper fitting, sturdy shoes with non-skid soles
- Use a long-handled shoe horn to help you slip on your shoes without bending over



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