



Tips on Trips: Preventing Falls by the Elderly

Trips and falls are a hazard throughout our lives. The dangers of injury increases as we age. Falls are the leading cause of injury among those over 65 years old. One in four Ontario hospital admissions among seniors is the result of a fall.

As we age changes in vision, hearing, muscle strength, reflexes and co-ordination may make us more likely to fall. Seniors also tend to take more medications that can cause dizziness, causing us to be unsteady on our feet. Aging bones also become more brittle making fractures from falls more likely to occur. The resulting injuries from trips and falls can limit our ability to lead active, independent lives. Therefore, it is important to know we do have some control over whether or not we will fall.

Accidents such as trips and falls seldom "just happen" and many can be prevented.

1. Store heavy items in lower cupboards and lighter items no higher than you shoulder height.
2. Have your vision and hearing tested regularly. Then use your prescribed glasses or hearing aid.
3. Maintain a regular program of exercise. This will improve strength, muscle tone and keep your joints more flexible. A well-balanced diet is also important.
4. Be sure household pathways are well lit and free of clutter.
5. Keep a working flashlight by your bed and use it if you are up at night.
6. Be sure carpets and rugs don't have curled edges and have non-skid backing.
7. In the bathroom, install handrails by the toilet and tub and place a rubber mat in the tub/shower.
8. If your doctor has advised you to use a cane or walker - use it.
9. When getting up from a lying position, sit on the bedside for several seconds to reduce dizziness.
10. If you fall and don't know why, see your doctor.