

Falling Down

There are many hazards in the average home that can lead to catastrophic injuries. Yet the most common at-home injuries, and one off the deadliest, is accidental falls. Falls are the leading cause of injury deaths among older adults. Older adults are particularly vulnerable since they are more likely to have medical problems that can contribute to falling, such as muscle weakness and impaired vision, or take medications that can cause dizziness or drowsiness. They are also more likely to suffer fractures from falls, especially if their bones are weakened by osteoporosis. In fact, most fractures among older adults are caused by falls, and falls are the most common cause of traumatic brain injuries.

Yet many homes have physical hazards that almost invite tumbles. In a national survey, three-quarters of households did not have grab bars in bathtubs or showers, and one-third had at least one stairway without handrails. Another study reported a seven-fold increase in computer-related injuries since 1994, mostly caused by tripping over equipment or cables. Ironically, many people who fall, even those who are not injured, develop a fear of falling. This fear may cause them to limit their activities, which leads to reduced mobility and physical fitness, which then actually increases their risk of falling.

Here are some tips on fall prevention:

- Exercise is one of the most important ways to lower your chances of falling. It makes you stronger and helps you feel better. Exercises that improve balance and coordination are the most helpful. Lack of exercise leads to weakness and increases your chances of falling.
- Install grab bars in showers and tubs, and always use non-skid strips or mats in tubs.
- Improve the lighting in your home. As you get older, you need brighter lights to see well. Use light-weight curtains or shades on windows to reduce glare.
- Put handrails on both sides of stairs, and keep stairways well lit and free of loose rugs and other item that can be tripped on.
- Keep cords and cable, especially those for computers, off the floor and tucked neatly away.
- Keep pathways in your home clear of any loose items.
- When using ladders, make sure the ladder is full opened and that spreaders are fully locked. Never stand on the top step or go beyond the highest rung that is labeled safe. Better yet, keep items you use often in cabinets you can reach easily without the use of a ladder.
- Consider using a Personal Emergency Response System (PERS). Falls suffered by older adults that live alone can result in their inability to get to a phone to call for help. A PERS system allows them to carry a small wireless button that can remotely activate a call to a monitoring center that can then notify a family member or paramedics.

For additional tips and information, check out the Center for Disease Control web site at www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Falls/CheckListForSafety.html

Coming Soon: E-checks...



We will soon be adding e-check processing to the payment options that are available to our customers. Electronic checking is easier, saves on postage costs, and is environmentally friendly by reducing paper use. Keep an eye out for e-checking in our next Security Update, or look for it on our web site at www.metrowestsecurity.com

Notes From Jane & Lloyd

Did the apple actually hit Sir Isaac Newton on the head? Not literally, although it did "hit" in his mind, which led him to formulate his theory of gravity. And while gravity has the positive effect of keeping our feet on the ground, it also has the unfortunate tendency to make us fall down when we least expect it.

Since we can't eliminate gravity, we should try to eliminate the opportunities it has to knock us down. The suggestions to the left are surprisingly simple, yet the big surprise is how often these simple fixes are ignored. We would all like to believe that we can still "bounce" like we did in our youth, but the reality is that, as we age, our bodies become more susceptible to injury. We can't live in a padded bubble, but we can take steps to prevent falls, or to reduce the severity of one.

And if you or a family member does fall down, having a PERS button around your neck can literally make the difference between life and death.

Best regards,
Jane & Lloyd Silverstein
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