

Your Home Safety Checklist



A few simple steps can make your home safer and help prevent you from falling

**Staying
On Your Feet**
Taking Steps to Prevent Falls



Your Home Safety Checklist



Everyone is at risk of falling, but older adults are more at risk of serious injuries from falls. Every year, one in three Canadians 65 years of age and over experience a fall. Many of these falls occur in and around the home.

A few simple steps can make your home safer. The first step to preventing a fall is knowing what risk factors exist in and around your home. This checklist will guide you in recognizing risks by providing a series of questions that look at the safety in your home and surrounding environment.

If you answer "no" to any of the questions, the checklist suggests what action you can take to make your home safer. Most changes are easy and inexpensive.

A safer home environment can help you maintain an independent lifestyle. Make sure that you take steps to prevent falls and remain mobile and independent.

For more information on falls prevention, contact:

- Health Links – Info Santé at 788-8200
- www.wrha.mb.ca

Most falls are preventable!

Take steps to prevent falls and remain mobile and independent

Information in this checklist is based on "Stay On Your Feet Western Australia" and has been adapted by the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority for use in Canada with copyright permission.

Kitchen

	Yes	No
1 Can you easily reach the kitchen items that you use regularly without climbing, bending or upsetting your balance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 Is there good lighting over work areas?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 Do you clean up spills immediately?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 Have you removed all throw rugs and mats?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Safety Tips

- Arrange your kitchen so the most frequently used items are easy to reach (between hip and eye level).
- Put rarely used things away – lighter items should be stored up high and heavy items should be stored at waist level.
- It is important to have good lighting in the kitchen.
- Always wipe up spills as they occur and keep floors clear of obstacles.
- Remove all loose throw rugs and mats.
- If needed, ensure throw rugs and mats are firmly secured and have a non-slip underlay.
- Make sure your flooring is slip-resistant and in good condition.
- If you need to use a step stool, make sure it has high, sturdy handrails. If you have strength or balance problems, do not use a step stool.
- Counters and tables should be sturdy enough to support your weight if you lean on them.
- If you need to reach high places, ask someone for help.
- Wear rubber-soled shoes in the kitchen. Never walk around in socks or slippers.
- Place your phone in an easy-to-reach location.

Bathroom

	Yes	No
1 Are your lights bright enough for you to see clearly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 Is your bathroom floor slip-resistant, even when wet?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 Have you removed all throw rugs and loose mats from the bathroom?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 Can you get on and off the toilet seat easily?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 Do you have your soap, shampoo and towel within easy reach so you don't have to bend or reach too far?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 Are you able to get out of the bath or shower without holding on to taps or towel racks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7 If you need grab bars, do you have them in the bath and shower?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8 Are you able to walk directly into your shower without stepping over a raised edge?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Safety Tips

- Many falls happen in the bathroom. Common causes include falling when getting on and off the toilet or in and out of the bath tub, or slipping on throw rugs or wet surfaces.
- Keep your floor clear of water and obstacles and use slip-resistant flooring.
- Remove all throw rugs and loose mats. If you must use a rug or mat in your bathroom, ensure it is firmly secured.
- A non-slip surface or self-adhesive non-slip strips can help prevent slipping in the shower and bath.
- Ensure your bathroom is brightly lit. Night-lights are an inexpensive way to provide light during darker periods of the day and at night.
- Grab bars are recommended in all positions around the tub and toilet. Never use a towel rack to support body weight.
- If you have limited energy and mobility, consider using devices such as a hand-held shower, raised toilet seat, handrail, and other equipment to make your bathroom safer.
- Move your soap and towel to a position within easy reach.
- Ensure shower doors are made of safety glass or replace with a shower curtain.
- Lower your hot water temperature to 49°C (120°F) to prevent scald burns.

Bedroom

	Yes	No
1 Are you able to turn on a light easily before you get out of bed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 Can you easily get in and out of your bed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 Do you have a telephone next to your bed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 Is there a clear, well-lit path from the bedroom to the bathroom?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 If you use a walking aid, can you reach your aid easily before you get out of bed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Safety Tips

- Have a lamp or light switch within reach of your bed. Nightlights or a flashlight will light your way from the bedroom to the bathroom.
- Keep floors free of clutter in the bedroom to allow easy access to bedroom closets and dressers.
- Remove all loose carpets and mats and make sure floor surfaces are not slippery.
- Keep a telephone on the bedside table and make sure the phone cord is away from pathways.
- Remove or secure all loose cords.
- Ensure your eyeglasses are easy to reach if you need them when you get out of bed.
- A firm mattress provides support and makes it easier to get in and out of bed. Your bed should be at a good height (average 22") so you can get in and out of it easily.
- Get out of bed slowly – sit up before you stand up to prevent dizziness.
- If you are having difficulty getting in or out of your bed, speak with your health provider.
- Make sure the items in your closet are easy to reach.
- Install a smoke alarm to alert you to danger.

Stairs

	Yes	No
1 Are stairs and steps well lit?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 Is there a light switch at the top and bottom of your stairs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 Do you have a sturdy handrail on both sides of the stairs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 Are you able to see the edges of the stairs clearly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 Are non-skid treads or paint used on the edges of each step?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 Are floor coverings on stairs in good condition?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Safety Tips

- Stairs may need extra lighting.
- Lights which turn on automatically are recommended.
- Place light switches at the top and bottom of stairs.
- It is safest when handrails are on both sides of the stairs. The handrail should extend the full length of the stairs.
- Mark the edge of the stair so you can see the beginning and end of the stair. You can apply a contrasting non-slip adhesive tread or paint the stair edge white or yellow.
- Ensure that your flooring is in good condition and all carpets or runners are firmly attached.
- Do not use loose throw rugs, runners or mats.
- Keep stairs clear of all obstacles.

Floors

	Yes	No
1 Do your carpets lie flat without wrinkles or curled edges?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 Have you removed all throw rugs and loose mats?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 Do you clean up spills as soon as they occur?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 Are floors free of clutter and obstacles?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 Are all cords away from pathways?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 Are floor surfaces non-slip and in good condition?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Safety Tips

- You are less likely to slip on surfaces such as carpet or slip-resistant tiles. These surfaces are preferable to polished floors, which can be very slippery.
- Make sure your carpets are in good condition.
- Remove all throw rugs and mats as they increase your risk of falling. If they are needed, ensure they are firmly secured and have non-slip underlay.
- Always wipe up spills as soon as they occur. Some floor surfaces are particularly slippery when wet. There are also "paint-on" non-slip products.
- Use contrasting colours and textures wherever there are changes in floor level.
- Make sure your floors are free of clutter and obstacles.
- If required, rearrange furniture to provide easy access to rooms, entrances and exits.
- Try to avoid extension cords by having extra power switches installed or by putting appliances closer to electrical outlets.

Lighting

	Yes	No
1 Are your lights bright enough for you to see clearly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 Are stairs and steps well lit?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 Are light switches easy to reach and near each doorway?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 Are there light switches at both ends of the hallway?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 Can you easily switch on a light from your bed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 Is there good lighting where you keep medications?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7 Do you have a flashlight that is easily accessible?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Safety Tips

- To ensure your home is well lit, use the maximum wattage that your light fixtures allow. Do not exceed the wattage recommended for your light fixtures.
- Nightlights are an inexpensive way to provide light to dark hallways.
- Consider installing motion-activated or photoelectric lights (sensor lights) in hallway or stairways, or simply leave a light on in these areas at night.
- Have extra lights installed or place lamps in dark areas.
- Replace all burned out light bulbs promptly. Ask someone to help you change ceiling lights or lights that are difficult to reach.
- Consider changing bulbs to Compact Fluorescent Light Bulbs (CFLs), which last 5 to 7 years before needing replacement.
- In bedrooms, use a bedside lamp as well as overhead lights or have dual switches installed – one beside the bed and one at the entrance to the room.
- Aging makes night vision less effective. Allow time for your eyes to adjust when going to and from light and dark areas.

Outside Your Home

	Yes	No
1 Are the edges of steps clearly marked?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 Do step edges have an adhesive non-slip strip?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 Do steps have a sturdy, easy-to-grip handrail?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 Are the sidewalks, driveway and decks around your home in good repair?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 Do the sidewalks, driveway and decks around your home have non-slip surfaces?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 Are the entrances, decks and sidewalks well lit and clear of obstacles such as leaves, snow and ice?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7 Is your garage floor free of grease and oil?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8 Is the garden kept free of hazards (e.g., rakes, hoses)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9 Are the public areas around your house in good repair?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Safety Tips

- Make sure all outside steps are highly visible by painting the front edge of the step a contrasting colour or by putting on a non-slip tread.
- Install handrails on both sides of steps and around decks.
- Ensure entrance steps, sidewalks and decks are well lit.
- Paths, sidewalks and driveways should be level, unbroken and kept free of leaves, ice and snow.
- Ensure that the surfaces of entrances, patios, sidewalks and driveways are slip-resistant and clear of obstacles.
- Ensure exterior doors are easy to open and close.
- Avoid using ladders. Have someone help you clean out eavestroughs, prune trees and do other tasks that require the use of a ladder.
- Store garden tools safely. Use a hose reel to store your garden hose.
- If you see a hazard in your community that could cause a fall, please call Health Links - Info Santé at 788-8200.

General

	Yes	No
1 Do you wear shoes with non-slip soles, even in your home?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 Are all cords, furniture and clutter kept away from traffic areas like hallways and stairs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 Do you have a list of emergency telephone numbers located near your phone?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 Can you get in and out of your chair easily?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 Are your pets trained to stay in places to prevent you from falling over them?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 Do you know what to do if you fall?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Safety Tips

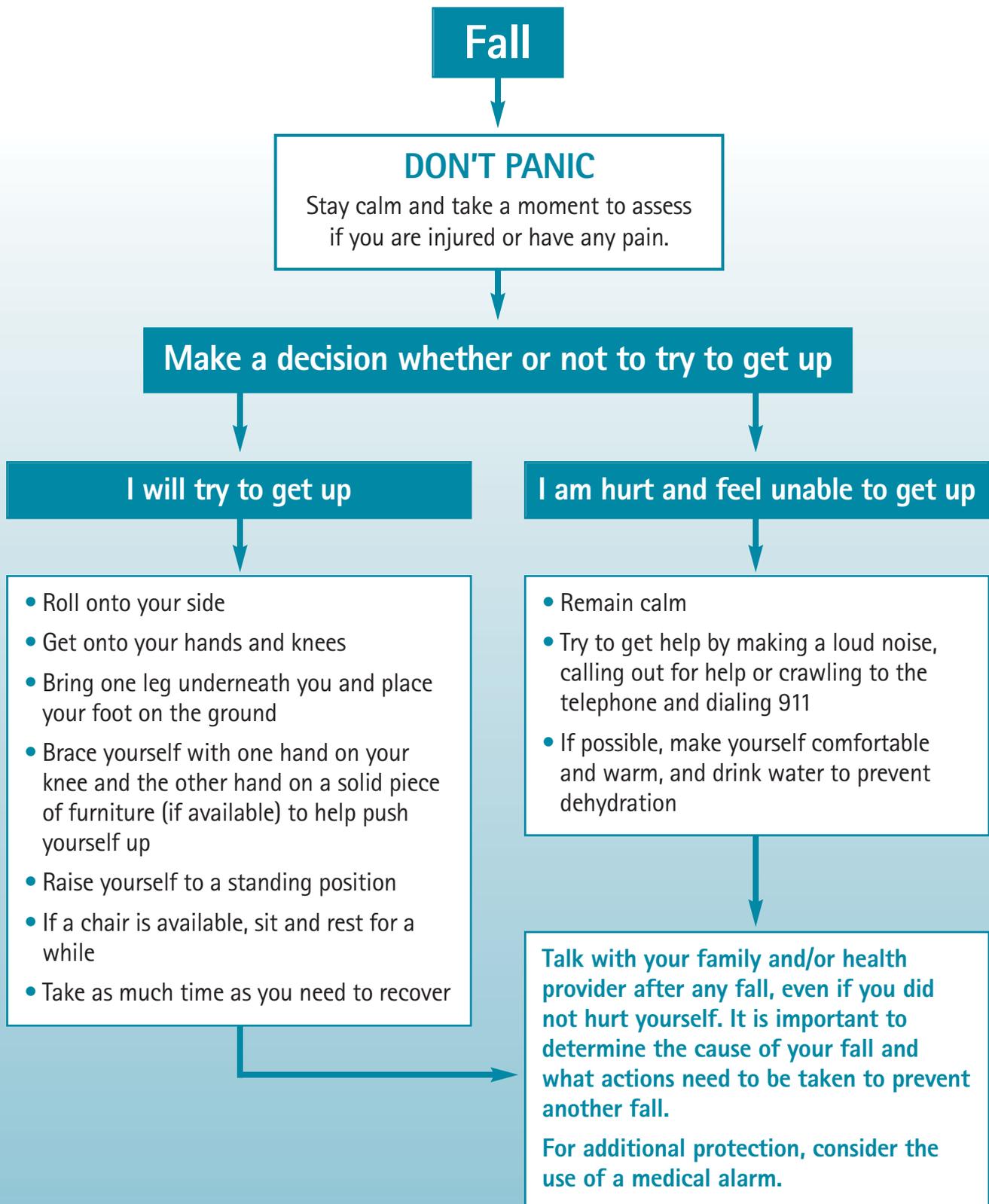
- Wear shoes in your home, not slippers, socks or stockings.
- Wear shoes that have non-slip soles with good tread and round, broad heels.
- Avoid loose fitting footwear and footwear with high heels or slippery soles.
- Sit down when dressing. Do not try to balance on one leg while getting dressed.
- Have emergency phone numbers listed near the phone.
- Consider using a medical alert service that lets you call for help at any time of the day or night.
- Put a phone near the floor in case you fall and can't get up.
- Keep all cords, furniture and clutter away from traffic areas like hallways.
- All furniture should be sturdy, secure and adequately spaced to allow you to move freely.
- Place your furniture so sturdy items are available for you to grab as you move through your home.
- If you use a walker or cane, make sure it is well-fitted.
- Chairs should have arms and be of a height that allows you to get in and out of them easily.
- Place a bell on your pet's collar so that you always know where he/she is, and place your pet's bed in a separate room at night. Obedience classes may also be useful.
- Review the information sheet at the back of this booklet – it tells you what to do if you fall.

Your personal review on home safety

Having reviewed this home safety checklist, develop your personal action plan by recording the positive steps you have taken and the changes you plan to take to make your home safer. A couple of examples are provided to help you get started.

What positive steps are you already taking?	What changes might help you stay on your feet?	How will you make these changes? Is there anyone you need to contact?
I had handrails installed on both sides of my stairs to the basement	I will put a telephone next to my bed	I'll call my phone service provider to install a phone jack next to my bed

What to do if you fall when you are alone



December 2008