

Section 5: Resources to Copy and Share

Throughout this Tool Kit there have been numerous references to resources and tools in Section 5. The checklists and handouts frequently used in information kits, displays, and community actions are together in this section. The materials are intended for your use and may be photocopied and shared.

Some of the resources are unchanged from the first edition of the Tool Kit, while others have been updated to reflect new statistics or research. Preventing Falls Together coalitions created new resources and some of these are included.

You will notice the resources have a similar look. On each sheet the Preventing Falls Together, NSHPP, and Community Links logos have been added as well as the telephone number of the central office and the website address. Now when you distribute information to the public they will know it is from our program.

We have left some space at the top right corner of each page just under the resource and page number. This area is for you to place your own local contact information with a label or stamp. Please contact the PFT staff if you need assistance with this.

The section starts with a variety of checklists, followed by information resources and other handouts.

Be creative! Use these resources to help make your communities safer for all and to reduce falls among seniors.

Note: Reproduction of these resources or any other part of this Tool Kit is for educational purposes only. Please credit the program as follows.

*Preventing Falls Together: A Population Health Tool Kit 2nd Edition
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Permission to alter or adapt these resources or other parts of the Tool Kit should be obtained from Community Links, Box 29103, Halifax, NS B3L 1G9
email: info@preventingfallstogether.ca



Resources to Copy and Share

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Ageing Well Together Falls Prevention

ARE YOU IN DANGER OF FALLING?

Please check all items that apply to you.

Personal Risks

- Have you fallen before?
- Do you often slip, trip or nearly fall?
- Do you need a cane or walker to keep your balance?
- Does climbing stairs make you feel unsteady or out of breath?
- Do you sometimes feel dizzy?
- Do you have foot problems, weak muscles or stiff joints?
- Do you have osteoporosis?
- Do you sometimes have to rush to the bathroom?
- Do you have trouble seeing clearly or difficulty concentrating?
- Do you take three or more medications?
- Do you drink alcohol frequently

*Adapted from
Go Ahead Seniors Inc./
Healthy Living Program
for Older Adults*

Risks in Your Home

- Does your home have stairs?
- Are there throw rugs or carpets that are not secured to the floor?
- Do you have a cat or dog?
- Do you have trouble getting in or out of the tub?
- Are parts of your home poorly lit?
- Can you see phone or electrical cords loose on the floor?
- Do you have to get out of bed to reach a telephone?
- Do you climb on a chair—or anything other than a sturdy step stool to reach things stored in high places?

Risks Outdoors

- Do you have to climb stairs to enter your home?
- Are there poorly lit or dark areas around your home?
- Are the sidewalks in your neighbourhood cracked or uneven?
- Are the stairs and walks that you use often snowy or icy in the winter or covered with leaves in the fall?

**If any of these items apply to you, you may be in danger of falling.
Talk with a health professional to find out how to reduce your risk.**



Ageing Well Together Falls Prevention

KEEPING YOURSELF HEALTHY AND ACTIVE

What does falls prevention have to do with fitness and food? Plenty! Spending time and energy on your health can provide a big pay off. You will not only feel better, you will considerably reduce your chances of having a fall or other injury.

Benefits of healthy eating

With age, your body continues to need essential nutrients to function correctly. Food deficiencies in seniors can cause or increase the risk of bone loss, heart disease, diabetes and arthritis, all of which increase your risk of falling. Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating provides general guidelines on the foods you need to maintain or improve your health. Healthy eating promotes a healthy heart, strong bones and resistance to infection and injury. Eating poorly, skipping meals or not eating enough can cause weakness and dizziness and increase your risk of a fall. That is why it's so important to eat regular, well-balanced meals every day.

Please check all items that apply to you.

Nutrition

- Have you checked out Canada's Food Guide to understand your basic nutritional needs?
- Do you eat a variety of foods from each food group every day?
- Do you often choose whole grain and enriched products?
- Do you often choose lower-fat foods and milk products?
- Do you select leaner meats, poultry and fish, or meat alternatives such as dried peas, beans and lentils?
- Do you eat at regular times?
- Do you eat breakfast every day?

*Prepared by Clarissa Jones, Intern,
Nova Scotia Health Promotion and Protection*



Ageing Well Together Falls Prevention

KEEPING YOURSELF HEALTHY AND ACTIVE

Benefits of active living

Remaining physically active also reduces your risk of falling by giving you more flexible joints, stronger bones and muscles, better heart and lung function, more energy, less fatigue, better sleep, and less anxiety and depression. Being active includes everyday activities such as walking, climbing stairs, gardening and shopping, as well as exercise classes and recreational activities like swimming, golf and Tai Chi. Whatever your current physical condition, you can engage in some form of physical activity with the help of your doctor or physiotherapist.

Canada's Physical Activity Guide for Older Adults explains why physical activity is important for seniors. It offers tips and easy ways to increase your level of activity, improve your health and prevent and manage diseases. The guide can be found online at: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/pau-uap/paguide/>

Please check all items that apply to you.

Physical Activity

- Do you build some physical activity into your daily routine? (e.g., walking, regular exercise class, at home exercise routine)
- Have you had a check up recently and talked to your doctor about increasing your physical activity?
- Have you checked into exercise programs for seniors available through your local seniors' centre, YM/YWCA, Recreation Centre, etc?

There is no time like the present. Even when physical activity starts in later life, it can lead to significant improvements in your health and quality of life. Choose activities that will build your endurance, increase your flexibility and improve your strength and balance. Remember to check with your doctor first and to start slowly.



Ageing Well Together Falls Prevention

KEEPING TRACK OF YOUR MEDICINE

Many seniors may receive several different prescriptions addressing different health problems. They may also combine prescription drugs with over-the-counter products and natural remedies. Medication interactions or over-medication can produce adverse reactions such as memory loss, drowsiness, agitation and confusion. These effects have been associated with falls and other injuries.

Review your medications with your doctor or pharmacist. One easy way to do this is to put all your medications, including herbal remedies, over-the-counter and non-prescription medicines in a bag and take it to your next doctor's appointment or pharmacy visit. Also: Don't mix drugs and alcohol. Alcohol can react with many common medications.

Please check all items that apply to you.

Medication Safety

- Do you talk to your health care professional about alternatives to medication? (Medication may not always be the best solution.)
- Do you read the instructions on each of your medication containers to check for side effects or possible ill effects of combining with another medication?
- Do you take your medication as prescribed and know of any alternative instructions should you forget to take it?
- Do you keep a list of what medications you are currently taking, and make sure your family is aware of it?
- If you have medication allergies, do you wear a medic alert bracelet or necklace?
- Do you know the difference between an allergy and a side effect?
- If you react to a medicine or experience side effects, do you report it to your doctor or pharmacist?
- Do you go through your medicine cabinet and properly discard any medicines that are past the "best before" date?
- Whenever you get a new medicine, do you ask for and obtain all the information on its use and side effects?



Ageing Well Together Falls Prevention

NEIGHBOURHOOD 'FALL SAFE' CHECKLIST

Walk through your neighbourhood with a friend or a small group. Check for hazards and trouble spots that could cause falls. Report what you find to your municipality or councillor. If you have found problems, ask that they be fixed. If all is well, congratulate them on a job well done!

Please check all items that apply to you.

Can you see where you are going and is the route level and clear?

- Are the streets, doorways, stairs, corners and alleys well lit?
- Are places where the surface changes easy to see?(For example, where a concrete walk turns into a gravel path or where a level path turns into stairs.)
- Are bus stops well lit and easy to see?
- Are the routes you travel level and clear?
- Are the sidewalks and shoulders level and not cracked?
- Is the sidewalk clear of obstacles? (e.g., bike racks, signs)
- Are the sidewalks and gutters clear of leaves, ice and snow?
- Are recreational walking paths well maintained?

Can you cross the streets safely?

- Are curbs clearly marked and easy to see?
- Are there curb ramps on the corners?
- Are traffic lights timed so that you can cross the street without rushing?
- Are crosswalks clearly marked, with pedestrian islands on wider roads?

Can you get into and out of public buildings easily?

- Do all stairs have handrails?
- Do interior stairs have handrails on both sides?
- Are the steps all the same height and wide enough to stand on comfortably?
- Are the edges of the steps marked and easy to see?
- Do the steps have non-slip surfaces?
- Are the stairs and stairwells well lit?
- Are the floors clean, dry and easy to walk on?
- Are there elevators/escalators to help you get to upper floors?



Ageing Well Together Falls Prevention

CHOOSE A 'FALL SAFE' MEETING SPACE

Use this checklist to choose the safest possible space for your meetings. Since no space is likely to be perfect, you can use the information to warn participants of potential hazards. You can also give a copy of this checklist to the owners of the space to let them know what they can/should do to make their facility safer.

Location: _____ Date: _____

Outdoors

Please check all items that apply to you.

- Is it close to public transportation?
- Are there enough parking spaces?
- Is the parking area level, smooth and free of potholes?
- Are the pathways into the building level and clear?
- Are the pathways and parking area shoveled and free of ice in winter?
- Are there handrails on stairs into the facility?
- Are the steps non-slip and in good repair?
- Are the edges of steps marked and easy to see?
- Are the parking area, paths and stairs well lit?
- Is the building accessible to walkers and wheelchairs?

Inside the Building

- Are the halls and stairs well lit?
- Are there handrails on both sides of stairs?
- Are the steps non-slip and in good repair?
- Are the edges of steps marked and easy to see?
- Are the floors level, clean, dry and easy to walk on — not slippery?
- Is an elevator available if meeting room is on an upper floor?
- Are the washrooms accessible, well lit and clean?
- Are toilets support bars in place?

Inside the Meeting Room

- Are the floors free of hazards — no loose rugs, no cords across the floor?
- Are the light switches within reach of the doorway?
- Is the room well lit and well ventilated?
- Is the seating sturdy and comfortable?
- Is there enough space between seats and tables to allow comfortable walking and easy passage for walkers and wheelchairs?



Ageing Well Together Falls Prevention

HOW 'FALL SAFE' IS YOUR SENIORS' CLUB?

Your local Preventing Falls Together coalition is interested in working with you to make sure your club is safe for your members. A coalition member together with a member of your club will use this checklist to assess the space for falls hazards. It's best to complete the check just before a club meeting. Then have the coalition member give a presentation on falls prevention including an overview of the identified falls risks in your clubs and some suggestions for improvements. A copy of the checklist will be sent to you and the coalition will keep a copy. You will be contacted by the coalition in three months time to discuss any changes your club has made to reduce the risk of falls.

Please check all items that apply to you.

Outside the Building

- Is the parking area level, smooth and free of potholes?
- Are the pathways into the building level and clear?
- Are the pathways and parking area clear of snow and ice in winter?
- Are there handrails on stairs into facility? (both sides)
- Are the steps non-slip and in good repair?
- Are the edges of steps marked and easy to see?
- Are the parking area, paths and stairs well lit?
- Is the building accessible to walkers/wheelchairs, etc.?
- Is there accessible parking close to building entrance?

Improvements: _____

Inside the Building

- Are the halls and stairs are well lit?
- Are there handrails on both sides of stairs?
- Are the steps non-slip and in good repair?
- Are the edges of steps marked and easy to see?
- Are the floors clean, dry, with non-slippery surfaces?
- Are the floors level and free from hazards – no cracks, loose mats or cords across the floor?
- Is the seating sturdy and comfortable?
- Is there enough space between the furniture to allow for walking and easy passage for walkers and wheelchairs?

Improvements: _____



Ageing Well Together Falls Prevention

HOW 'FALL SAFE' IS YOUR SENIORS' CLUB?

In the Bathroom

- Are the washrooms accessible, well lit and free of clutter?
- Are there grab bars close to the toilet?
- Are the light switches within reach of the doorway?

Improvements: _____

In the Kitchen

- Is the floor level, clean, and dry?
- Are spills wiped up immediately?
- Are heavy and often used items stored in lower cupboards or shelves?
- Is there a sturdy step stool with a handrail?
- Are there reaching aids?
- Is there good lighting?

Improvements: _____

Additional Comments & Suggestions for Improvements: _____

Name of Seniors' Club: _____

Name of PFT coalition: _____

Name of Facility/Building: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Date Assessed: _____

The assessment was conducted by:

Club Members: _____

PFT Coalition Members: _____



Ageing Well Together Falls Prevention

FALL PROOF YOUR PLACE OF WORSHIP

Use the following checklist to assess your place of worship for falls hazards.

OUTDOORS: ON YOUR PROPERTY

- Is the parking area level, smooth and free of potholes?
- Are the pathways into the building level, clear and free of ice and snow in winter?
- Are there handrails on both sides of stairs into the building?
- Are the steps non-slip and in good repair?
- Are the edges of steps marked and easy to see?
- Are the parking areas, paths and stairs well lit?
- Is the building accessible to walkers, wheelchairs etc?
- Is there handicapped parking close to building entrance?

INSIDE YOUR PLACE OF WORSHIP

- Are the floors clean, dry, and easy to walk on—not slippery?
- Are the floors free of hazards—no loose rugs, no cords across the floor?
- Are all of the carpeting and mats secure with no loose edges?
- Are the rooms, halls and stairs well lit?
- Are the steps non-slip and in good repair with edges clearly marked?
- Are there handrails on both sides of stairs?
- Is there an elevator or ramp available to reach upper floors?
- Are the washrooms accessible, well lit, and free of clutter?
- Are there toilet grab bars in place?
- Are the light switches within reach of the doorways?
- Is the seating sturdy and comfortable?
- Is there enough space to allow seating, easy passage for walkers, and parking for wheelchairs?

Anyone can fall, but as we get older, our risk of falling increases as does the severity of the injuries resulting from falls. In Canada, falls cause 65% of all injuries to seniors. Falling is one of our most under recognized health problems. Falling, and the risk of falling, is a part of everyday life for seniors. But we can prevent many falls. By working together to prevent falls, we can help seniors continue to be active participants in their religious community. Making our places of worship safer for seniors will make them safer for us all.



Ageing Well Together Falls Prevention

HOME ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

This resource has been designed to identify hazards that may cause falls in a home. Some questions occur repeatedly because the same hazard can occur in more than one room in the home.

Please check all items that apply to you.

Exterior Entrance

- Steps or stairs have at least one sturdy railing
- Edges of steps are clearly visible
- Steps have a non-slip surface
- Garage/shed accessible from house
- Garage/shed floor is free from skid risks, water, oil, etc.
- Resident has arrangements for snow and ice removal
- Entrance way lighting is good
- Walkway and entrance are free of trip hazards
- Doors open easily

SUGGESTIONS: _____

Interior Entrance

Light switch is within easy reach

- Lighting is good (at least 60 watts)
- There is a seat close by
- Flooring is non-slip
- Entrance is free of obstacles

SUGGESTIONS: _____

Kitchen

- Light switch is close to entrance
- Lighting is adequate
- Flooring is non-slip, level and in good repair
- Cleaning supplies are stored at an accessible height
- Cooking supplies, dishes and pots are easily reached
- A sturdy step stool with handrails is available
- Telephone or other cords are safely located

SUGGESTIONS: _____



Ageing Well Together Falls Prevention

HOME ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Please check all items that apply to you.

Living Room

- Light switch is close to entrance
- Lighting is adequate
- Rugs are secure
- Flooring is non-slip
- Rugs have no ripples or tears
- Furniture placement minimizes risk
- Electrical cords are safely located
- Room is free of clutter

SUGGESTIONS: _____

Stairways (to upper level and/or basement)

- Light switches at top and bottom of stairs
- Lighting at top and bottom of stairs is adequate
- Sturdy handrails are present on both sides of stairs
- Handrail height feels comfortable when used for support
- Handrails extend 12 inches beyond the top and bottom steps
- Non-slip surfaces
- All steps are the same height and depth
- Stairs are free from obstacles and clutter

SUGGESTIONS: _____

Bedroom

- Light switch is close to entrance
- Lighting is adequate
- A lamp is easily reached from the bed
- A telephone is easily reached from the bed
- A flashlight is easily reached from bed
- Pathway to bathroom is clear and lit with a night light
- Electrical cords are safely located
- Flooring is non-slip
- Rugs have no ripples or tears

SUGGESTIONS: _____



Ageing Well Together Falls Prevention

HOME ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Please check all items that apply to you.

Bathroom

- Light switch is close to entrance
- A night light is present
- Bathtub plug is easy to reach and to use
- A non-slip rubber mat is used in the tub
- There are at least two secure grab bars in the tub area
- Portable tub grab bars remain secure when used for support
- Mat outside the bathtub has a rubber backing
- If a raised toilet seat is used, it is sturdy and secure
- A grab bar is located beside the toilet

SUGGESTIONS: _____

Personal Habits

- I move slowly after lying or sitting to prevent dizziness
- I have a strategy to follow if I were to fall e.g. Personal Response Alarm
- I always wear well-fitted shoes with low heels and non-slip soles
- I use a cane or other mobility aid adjusted to my needs
- My cane or mobility aid is rubber tipped
- I do not wear clothes that create trip hazards (e.g. long housecoat)
- I avoid using bath oil
- I turn on a night light before I go to bed
- I turn on a light when I get up at night
- I make a point of knowing where my cat/dog is to avoid tripping
- I have had my vision and hearing checked within the past year
- I have my blood pressure checked regularly
- I have reviewed my medications with my doctor or pharmacist within the last year
- I participate in a regular exercise program

SUGGESTIONS: _____



Ageing Well Together Falls Prevention

FACTS ABOUT SENIORS AND FALLING

Falls are the main cause of injuries to seniors.

In Canada, falls cause:

- 65% of all injuries to seniors
- 85% of injury-related hospital admissions among seniors
- 58% of injury-related deaths among seniors
- 90% of all hip fractures to seniors

Falls are expensive.

- In Canada, the total cost of health care due to seniors' falls is \$1.4 billion per year.
- In Nova Scotia, falls among seniors cost the health care system \$72 million each year.

Falls cost more than just money.

- Injuries caused by falls result in pain, suffering and loss of independence.
- Seniors who have been injured in a fall are three times more likely to need nursing home placement than those who have not fallen.
- About 40% of admissions to long-term care facilities are related to falls.
- Fear of falling keeps seniors at home, leading to loneliness and lack of physical activity.

Falls are much too common.

- Each year, one out of every three seniors will fall. More than half of these seniors will fall more than once.
- Two-thirds of falls requiring hospitalization occur in the home.
- Women are three times more likely than men to be hospitalized for a fall-related injury.
- The older you are, the more likely you are to fall and be seriously injured.

There is good news too...

Working together, we can reduce the risk factors that cause falls. Making our homes and communities safer for seniors will make them safer for us all.

**Falls are the most preventable risk to seniors' health,
well-being and independence.**



Ageing Well Together Falls Prevention

RISK FACTORS FOR FALLING

1. Dizziness- What Can Cause Dizziness?

- Not eating regularly
- Change in body position (e.g. from sitting to standing)
- Low blood pressure
- High blood pressure
- Medication side effects
- Inner ear problems
- Acute illness or infection

What you can do

- Sit on the side of the bed for a few minutes before you stand up.
- After standing, pause and take one slow deep breath before you take a step.
- Have your blood pressure checked regularly.
- Tell your doctor if your medication is making you drowsy or dizzy.
- Have your hearing checked and include a check for possible infections.
- Attend blood pressure clinics.
- Perform mild balance related exercises or consult with your physiotherapist, a doctor or nurse about balance training.
- Ask your doctor to refer you to a nutritionist.

2. Medications- What Can Cause Medication Concerns?

- Taking over the counter (non-prescription) medications, herbal remedies or alcohol while also taking prescription medications.
- Using someone else's medications.
- Not being sure what medications you are taking, how many you should take, and why you need to take them.
- Using outdated medication.
- Your doctor may not be aware of all the medications you are taking especially if you see other physicians including specialists.
- Your doctor may not be aware of the side effects you have experienced.

*Adapted from: "The First Step to Falls
Prevention", Burnaby, B. C.*



Ageing Well Together Falls Prevention

RISK FACTORS FOR FALLING

What you can do

- Never borrow medication from others.
- Keep a list of your medications in your wallet or purse and on the fridge.
- Throw away outdated medications.
- If you are taking prescription medications, check with your pharmacist or doctor before you use any over-the-counter medications or herbal remedies.
- Avoid alcohol when you are taking prescription medications.
- Review your medications with your doctor at least every six months and whenever any medication is added or stopped.
- Ask your pharmacist about medication side effects and possible drug interactions before taking any medication.
- Use the same pharmacy for all your prescriptions.

3. Foot Problems- What Can Cause Foot Problems?

- Poorly fitting footwear, high heels, and shoes with no support.
- Joint problems in your feet as a result of arthritis and previous injury.
- Untreated foot, skin, and nail problems, like calluses, bunions, or ingrown toenails.
- Loss of sensation which makes it difficult to feel the floor which can be caused by diabetes or neurological disorders.

What you can do

- Wear proper fitting supportive shoes with low broad heels.
- Talk with a nurse or doctor about calluses, bunions, corns, or ingrown toenails.
- Wear loose socks or stockings. Knee-highs can cut off circulation in your legs and numb your feet.
- Swelling in your legs and feet can be a sign of a medical problem. Talk to your doctor.



Ageing Well Together Falls Prevention

RISK FACTORS FOR FALLING

4. Weak Muscles, Stiff Joints and Brittle Bones- What Can Cause Weak Muscles and Stiff Joints?

- Lack of physical activity, including stretching and walking.
- Unresolved injury, pain or discomfort.
- Conditions affecting the muscles and joints such as arthritis, osteoporosis, Parkinson's and stroke.

What you can do

- Join an exercise program.
- Join a program for helping osteoporosis.
- Plan a regular activity and gradually increase the amount of time you spend on it.
- See a physiotherapist for specialized exercises.
- Contact local support groups.
- Talk with your doctor about your discomfort or soreness.

Think about:

- the time of day you are likely to be uncomfortable
- activities that make you sore or cause discomfort
- when the discomfort is worst
- what you do for the discomfort

It's a good idea to write down all this information down and discuss it with your doctor, a physiotherapist, occupational therapist, or nurse.

5. Bladder and Bowel Control- What Can Cause Changes in Bladder and Bowel Control?

- Weakness of muscles controlling flow
- Infection
- Side effects of medications
- Prostate problems
- Constipation can contribute to bladder problems
- Changes in your eating and drinking habits



Ageing Well Together Falls Prevention

RISK FACTORS FOR FALLING

What you can do

- For constipation: eat a high fiber diet, get plenty of fluid and exercise.
- Drink enough fluids. Drinking too little fluids will cause irritation to the bladder and possibly urinary tract infection.
- Incontinence products are available at medical supply stores and pharmacies.
- Talk to a doctor, nurse or physiotherapist about exercises to strengthen muscles that control urine flow.
- See your doctor if you notice any changes in bladder and/or bowel control. Tell your doctor about any blood in your urine, foul smelling urine, difficulty or pain urinating, urinary frequency, difficulty getting to the bathroom on time, constipation or diarrhea.
- If you use bifocals, be extra careful while you adjust to them, especially on stairs.
- Have your vision checked once a year.

6. Difficulty with Vision or Hearing- What Can Cause Vision Difficulties?

- Dirty or scratched eye glasses
- Getting used to bifocals
- Eyesight prescription has changed
- Low lighting causing eyestrain
- With age, eyes become sensitive to glaring light
- Diseases affecting the eyes such as cataracts, glaucoma, infections, diabetes

What you can do

- Wear sunglasses.
- Maintain control of diabetes.
- Clean glasses regularly. Use a non-glare cleaner and soft cloth.
- Pause and give your eyes time to adapt to changes in light.
- Use good lighting and night lights in halls, stairways, and bathrooms.

What Can Cause Hearing Difficulties?

- Wax build up in ear
- Age-related hearing loss, hearing-aid or inner ear problems



Ageing Well Together Falls Prevention

RISK FACTORS FOR FALLING

What you can do

- Have your hearing checked periodically and maintain your hearing aids in good working condition.
- See your doctor about any dizziness or other symptoms related to inner ear problems.

7. Sleep Disturbances- What Can Cause Difficulties with Sleeping?

- Lack of daily physical activity
- Poor sleeping environment
- Lack of sunlight
- Stress
- Feeling nervous, anxious or worrying.
- Age-related intolerance to sleeping pills
- Sadness or depression
- Medication and alcohol use
- Aches and pains
- Grief and loss
- Having coffee, tea, cola, alcohol or chocolate in the evening
– these all contain caffeine
- Napping in the late afternoon and early evening.

What you can do

- Keep bedroom cool and quiet.
- Ensure mattress is firm and comfortable.
- Do not nap in late afternoon/early evening and limit daytime naps to 15 minutes or less.
- Learn relaxation techniques.
- A normal sleeping pattern for older adults is six hours per night, awakening twice during the night, with 20 minutes to go back to sleep.
- If you can't sleep after 20 to 40 minutes, get up and do something quiet
– for example, read a book or listen to music.
- Get more exercise daily. Try to go outside and walk for 20 minutes a day.
- Limit alcohol as it reduces the amount of restful sleep you get.
- Talk with someone you trust about feeling anxious or sad.
- Talk about your problem with a health care professional, your community nurse, pharmacist or family doctor.



Ageing Well Together Falls Prevention

RISK FACTORS FOR FALLING

8. Shortness of breath- What Can Cause Shortness of Breath?

- Smoking
- Lack of physical activity
- Obesity
- Pollution
- Allergies/asthma
- Heart problems
- Lung, respiratory infections or chronic diseases such as bronchitis, emphysema

What you can do

- Cut down or stop smoking with help from family, friends, education programs.
- Try to stay away from places where air is polluted – like smoking areas.
- Get your annual flu shot and one time pneumonia vaccine to prevent severe respiratory infections.
- Gradually get more physical activity – walk a block or join a fitness program.
- Eat healthy, nutritious meals.
- Talk with your doctor about shortness of breath and why it is occurring, when it happens, how it limits your activities.

9. Hazards in the Home- Why Don't People Remove Hazards?

- Procrastination, the human tendency to put things off
- Difficulty making changes (need assistance to move items)
- People may be reluctant to ask for assistance
- People do not always stop and think about the safety of their home

What you can do

- Plan a time to check your home for hazards.
- Have an occupational therapist review your home to give recommendations to improve and help you remain safe and independent.
- Ask for assistance to make repairs or renovations.
- Check with local services if assistance is available.



Ageing Well Together Falls Prevention

RISK FACTORS FOR FALLING

10. Need for Special Equipment or Help with Day-to-Day Activities

Why don't people have the assistance they may need?

- Often people do not want to appear that they are in need of special assistance.
- People think that special equipment or asking for assistance will make them less independent.
- The ability to complete tasks independently can vary from day to day if there is a change in health status.
- It may be difficult to make the required changes- for example, a senior may need assistance to move items.
- People don't always stop and think about the safety of their actions.

What you can do

- If you notice a significant change in your ability to complete activities see your doctor to review your health status.
- Ensure that special devices are kept within close reach.
- Remind yourself that using special equipment or getting assistance will help you to remain more independent by avoiding a serious injury.
- Ensure that you receive training in the use of any special equipment from an occupational or physiotherapist to be certain that you are using it safely.



Ageing Well Together Falls Prevention

RISK FACTORS FOR FALLING

11. Alcohol Overuse

What Can Cause Overuse of Alcohol?

- Using alcohol to aid sleep
(Alcohol actually disturbs normal sleeping patterns).
- Using alcohol to relieve aches and pains
(Alcohol can cause greater aches and pains).
- Loneliness
- Sadness or depression
- Grief and loss
- Boredom
- Stressful situations

MYTH:
Alcohol tolerance
is the same throughout life.

FACT: Aging decreases your
tolerance for alcohol. Over-
use can cause major health
problems.

What you can do

- Keep a record of how much alcohol you drink and why you are using it.
- Learn about how your body responds differently with age.
- Find out whether your feelings are common so you can find healthy ways to deal with them.
- Share your feelings with someone you trust such as a family member, friend or peer counselor.
- If you are feeling sad or nervous, do not feel like eating, or start losing interest in your activities, then talk with the community nurse, a peer counselor or your family doctor.
- Join a community group or activity.
- Tell your doctor about your aches and pains and discuss ways to manage the problem.
- Talk with societies or groups that are trained to counsel on alcohol misuse.



Ageing Well Together Falls Prevention

TAKE CHARGE! BY FALLPROOFING YOUR HOME

Look at the FLOORS

IF YOU SEE...

Furniture you have to walk around to get through a room

- Ask someone to help you move the furniture to clear a path.

Throw rugs or loose carpets

- Remove the rugs (best) OR
- Use double-sided tape so the rugs don't slide and the carpet edges don't curl up.

Clutter — like books, magazines or shoes

- Pick it up and store it on shelves
- Tape the cords to the baseboard so they are out of the way
- Have an electrician install extra outlets so you don't need extension cords
- Switch to cordless phones

Slippery, shiny floors

- Stop using floor polish or wax
- Always wear shoes with non-slip soles

A pet sleeping in your path

- Stay alert and always know where your pet is
- Try to train your pet to sleep in one place.

Look at the STAIRS inside and outside

IF YOU SEE...

Clutter or other objects — like flowerpots

- Remove them
- Keep stairs clear

Shaky, broken, uneven or missing steps

- Repair them OR
- Find a handyman, volunteer or family member to repair them and keep them in good shape

Smooth, slippery steps

- Put non-slip treads on each step
- Paint outdoor steps with a mixture of sand and paint for better traction
- Paint the edges of outdoor steps a contrasting colour so they are easier to see

Loose or torn carpet on stairs

- Make sure the carpet is attached on every step OR
- Remove the carpet and use non-slip treads on each step

Stairs with no handrails or with shaky or broken handrails

- Fix the handrails or have new ones installed
- Be sure there are handrails on both sides of the stairs and that they go all the way from the top to the bottom of the stairs



Ageing Well Together Falls Prevention

TAKE CHARGE! BY FALLPROOFING YOUR HOME

Look at the LIGHTING in your home.

IF YOU SEE...

Dimly lit halls and rooms

- Use brighter bulbs — 100 watts
- Use light fixtures with more than one bulb so if one bulb burns out, you will still be able to see until it gets replaced
- Use nightlights in hallways

No lights or dim lighting on stairs

- Have an electrician install lights and light switches at the top and bottom of the stairs

No light switch within reach when you stand in the doorway of each room

- Have an electrician install a light switch near the entry to each room

Look at your KITCHEN.

IF YOU SEE...

Items you often use stored on hard-to-reach shelves

- Move pots, pans and other items you use often to waist-high, easy-to-reach places.
- Store heavy items in lower cupboards

A chair or an unsteady step stool used for reaching high places

- Get a sturdy step stool with a safety rail to hold on to
- Never use a chair for climbing

Look at your BATHROOM.

IF YOU SEE...

A slippery floor in tub or shower

- Use a rubber bath mat or put non-slip strips on the tub or shower floor

Nothing sturdy to hold onto when getting out of the tub or off the toilet

- Have a handyman or carpenter install grab bars around the tub, shower and toilet
- If you have trouble getting up from the toilet, install a raised toilet seat
- If you ever feel dizzy or tired while bathing, put a bath seat in the tub or shower

Look at your BEDROOM

IF YOU SEE...

No clear path between the bed and the bathroom

- Clear a path. Get help if you need to move furniture.
- Make sure the path is free of clutter
- Install automatic nightlights along the way so you can find your way in the dark

No light or phone within reach of the bed

- Install a lamp or light switch that you can reach without getting out of bed
- Keep a phone within reach
- Keep a flashlight by your bed



Ageing Well Together Falls Prevention

Annapolis Valley Health Falls Prevention

FALLPROOF YOURSELF!

Keep moving

Wear comfortable footwear

Fallproof your home

Fallproof your community

Ask for help with chores

Use helping devices

Take your time

Eat well

Know your medications

Watch your step

Be careful with alcohol

Get regular checkups



Ageing Well Together Falls Prevention

FALLPROOF YOURSELF!

- **Keep moving.** Daily exercise and physical activity will help you stay on your feet by improving your balance and making you stronger and more flexible.
- **Wear shoes with good support and non-slip soles.** Don't walk around in socks.
- **Fallproof your home** by finding and fixing hazards. Seniors organizations and community groups can sometimes help with repairs.
- **Fallproof your community.** Work with other seniors to find the hazards in public places and have them remedied.
- **Ask for help with chores**—for example, changing the bulbs in ceiling lights or carrying heavy items up and down stairs.
- **Use helping devices** and have them checked regularly. Make sure that the tips of canes or walkers are not worn down and they are the right size for your height.
- **Take your time.** Stand up slowly after lying down or sitting. If you feel dizzy or light-headed, sit down until your head clears.
- **Eat well.** You need regular, healthy meals to stay strong, healthy and upright.
- **Know your medications** and what they do. Some medicines or combinations of medicines can make you dizzy, drowsy or clumsy. Ask your doctor or pharmacist to review all the medicines you take, including over-the-counter remedies, to be sure they are safe together.
- **Watch your step.** Check ahead to be sure you don't trip on a pet or another obstacle. Turn on lights as you go from room to room.
- **Be careful with alcohol.** The older you get, the more quickly alcohol will affect you. More than two drinks a day can make you unsteady on your feet. Be careful not to mix alcohol with medications.
- **Get regular checkups.** Visit your doctor every year for a check-up and a chat about any changes to your health. Have your eyes and ears checked regularly. If you need glasses or hearing aids, use them.



Ageing Well Together Falls Prevention

SOME IDEAS FOR USING THE FALL PROOF YOURSELF CIRCLES

- Enlarge them separately on a photocopier and use them in your displays. (colouring optional!)
- Use them with elementary school children for a falls prevention colouring contest.
- Use them with young elementary children to start a discussion -what lesson about falls do you see in each picture?
- Have participants pick the circles from a hat. As they are drawn from the hat, talk a little bit about the subject of the circle-or ask participants to talk about it!
- Laminate them and use as fridge magnets. (colouring recommended!)
- Use the circles to divide participants into discussion groups by having several copies of each circle corresponding to the size of group you want. You will only use as many different circles as the desired number of groups. e.g. for dividing group of 25 into 5 groups of 5: Use 5 different circles, make 5 photocopies of each. Ask participants to pull out of a hat- or distribute them to each at random.
- Use them to correspond with the months of the calendar to focus the topic of discussion about falls at monthly meetings.



Ageing Well Together Falls Prevention

FALLS PREVENTION ON THE GO

Getting out and about is important to your health and well-being. With a little care, you can stay on your feet so you can stand up and be counted in your community.

- **Plan ahead** so you don't have to rush. You are more likely to fall if you are in a hurry.
- **Plan your errands so you don't end up trying to carry too much.** Carrying too many parcels throws you off balance and blocks your view.
- **Wear the right footwear** for the weather and the surface you will be walking on.
- **Use mobility and safety aids if you need them.** An occupational or physiotherapist can show you how to get the most benefit from aids like canes and shoes with ice grips.
- **Stay alert and notice changes along the routes you walk.** Has a sidewalk developed cracks? Is a light burnt out? When you see hazards, report them.
- **Take care of yourself!** Eat well, stay active, and get regular physicals and ear and eye exams. You are less likely to fall if you are well and strong.

You can help keep your community safe for everyone by working with others to report hazards along the streets in your neighbourhood. If a local group is collecting information on falls or hazards that could cause falling, get in touch with them and find out how you can participate. If no one is collecting this kind of information in your community, suggest that a group you are involved with consider doing it as a project.



Ageing Well Together Falls Prevention

PREVENT FALLS WHILE TRAVELLING

In General...

- *Stay alert and be aware of your surroundings.* Look for hazards like uneven paths, broken sidewalks, slippery floors and unlit stairs.
- *Dress for comfort and safety.* Wear comfortable walking shoes with low heels and non-slip soles. Avoid loose clothing or dangling straps that can catch on things and pull you off balance.

In a Hotel...

- *Ask for a room on a lower floor.* This saves you having to climb unfamiliar stairs.
- *Ask for a room with grab bars in the bathroom.*
- *Ask for a non-slip mat for the bathroom floor and bathtub.* Before you use it, check to be sure it really sticks to the tub.
- *Make sure there is a clear path from your bed to the bathroom and to the exit from your room.* If there is furniture blocking the way, call the front desk and ask for help to move it.
- *Keep a light on at night.* You can easily trip in an unfamiliar room. Leaving the bathroom light on and the door partly open will give enough light to see by. You could also bring a nightlight with you when you travel.

On a Tour...

- *Ask for help if you need it.* Take the arm of the Tour Director if you feel unsteady or want some help on uneven ground or stairs. Tour Directors and drivers are there to help.
- *Stay in your seat while the bus is moving.* If you need to use the bathroom on the bus, hold on to each headrest you pass.
- *Take care getting on and off the bus.* Ask for help if you need it. Many people prefer to climb backwards down the bus steps. This makes it easier to hold onto the handrails and makes the step down easier on the ankles. Be very careful when using a step stool to climb on or off a bus. These can be very unsteady. Be sure your foot is planted firmly in the center of the stool and hold onto the door rail.
- *Take your time.* Don't run to catch up to a group or return to the bus. They will wait for you. After all, the delay will be longer if you fall.



Ageing Well Together Falls Prevention

SENIORS SHOULD WEAR SNEAKERS

Potentially fatal falls are much more likely if elderly people don't wear shoes or wear footwear other than athletic shoes, according to new research. The research, published in the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society, found that seniors who wore any type of shoes other than sneakers increased their risk of falling by more than 30%.



- One in three adults age 65 and older suffer serious falls each year.
- In Canada alone, more than 5,000 seniors die of falls annually.
- Most falls occur while people are walking on level surfaces (not on stairs).
- People who walked barefoot or in stocking feet were 10 times as likely to fall as those who wore sneakers, the researchers found.
- The risk of falling while wearing loafers or laceup oxfords was 30% - 50% higher than while wearing sneakers.
- The low heel, strong-grip bottom and the firm but flexible support offered by sneakers make them the best choice of footwear for seniors.
- Consider wearing sneakers even while engaging in everyday activities in and around your house.

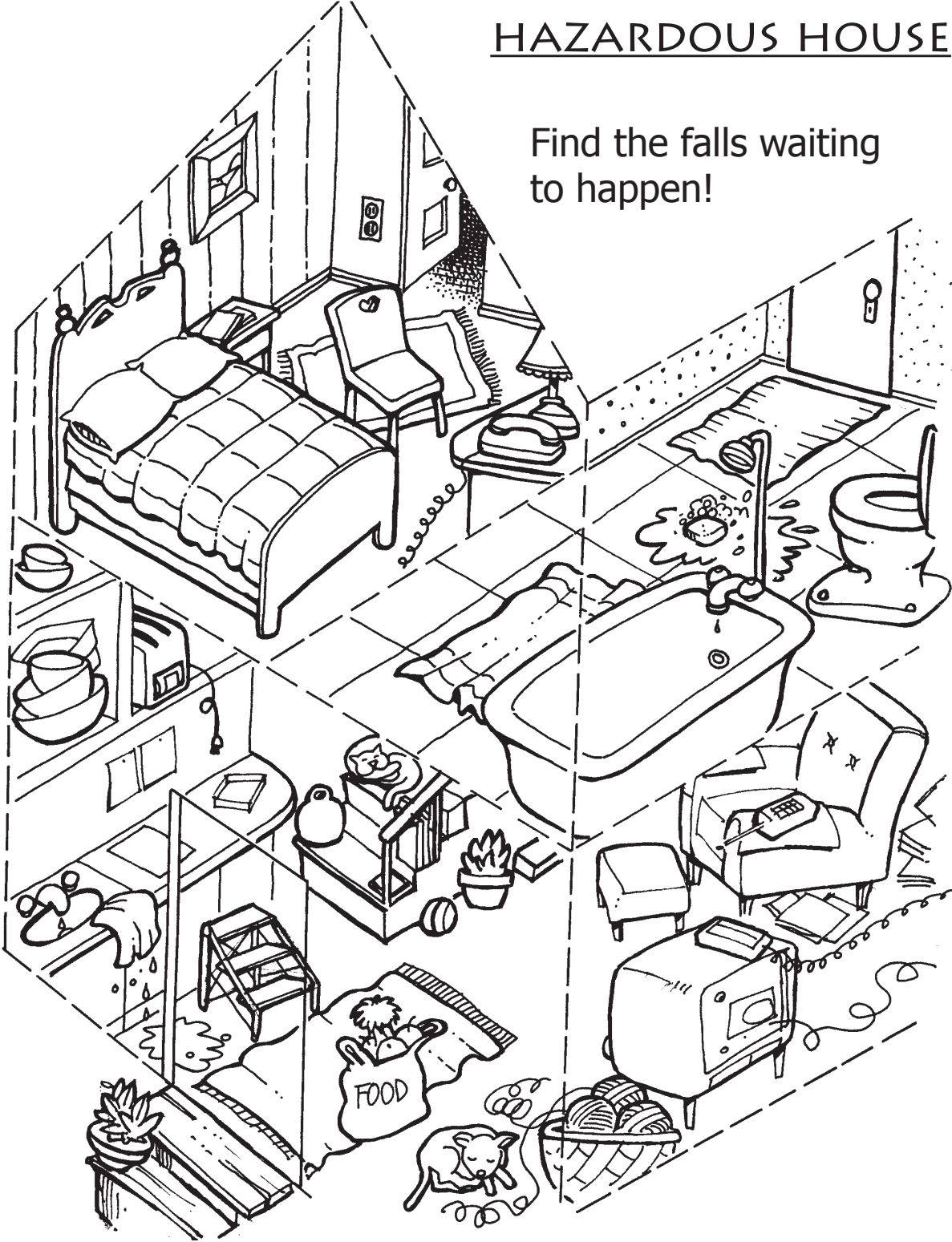




Ageing Well Together Falls Prevention

HAZARDOUS HOUSE

Find the falls waiting
to happen!





Ageing Well Together Falls Prevention

Exterior Steps:

- Flower pot
- Steps in poor repair
- No handrail

Living room:

- Loose area rug
- Grocery bag on the floor
- Sleeping dog in the pathway
- Clutter on the floor – dog's ball, flower pot, pile of books
- Yarn trailing from basket
- Trailing phone and TV cords

Kitchen:

- Unsafe step stool (needs hand rail)
- Frequently used utensils stored on high shelves
- Dish cloth dripping onto floor

Interior stairs:

- Sleeping cat
- Books and other clutter on steps

Bedroom:

- Phone and lamp can't be reached from the bed
- Trailing phone cord
- No night light in visible outlet
- Chair blocking the path to the doorway

Hall:

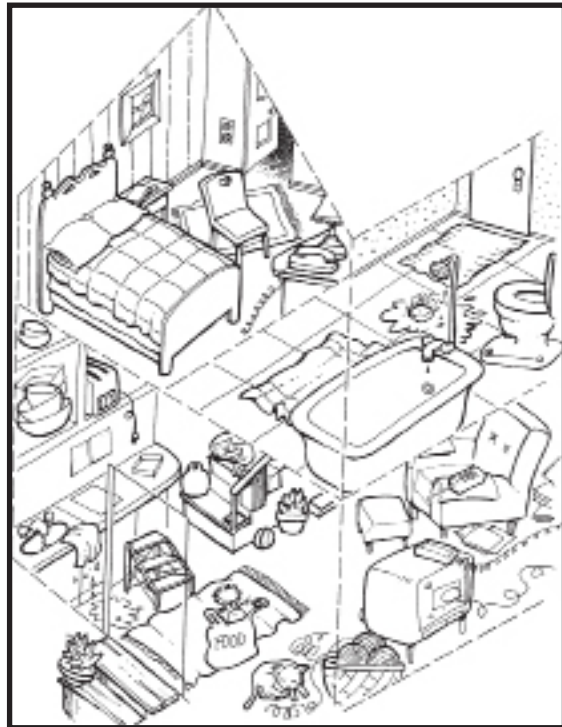
- Hall is dark and has no night light

Bathroom:

- Soap and water on floor
- No grab bars on or around tub
- No supports around toilet

HAZARDOUS HOUSE

ANSWER KEY



Ideas for use:

- Find a partner or group of 3-4 people
- Work together to find and circle as many hazards as possible in 2 minutes



Ageing Well Together Falls Prevention

THE HAZARDOUS HOUSE TEACHERS' GUIDE

Background...Why the Concern?

Falls can happen to anyone, but as a person ages, the risk of falling increases. In fact, one in three older Canadians fall each year and many of these falls occur in their own homes while doing everyday activities.

Falling is a serious health problem that accounts for most injuries to the elderly, and cost Nova Scotians an estimated 72 million dollars every year. Not only are there medical costs, but social and physical impacts as well. A fall can lead to a loss of independence, social isolation, and a reduced quality of life.

The good news is that many injuries due to falls can be prevented. The first step to avoiding falls is to become aware of what causes them. There are many opportunities within all of our communities to act more preventatively to reduce the risk of falls... whether it's using a meeting hall, walking on a sidewalk, climbing stairs or lighting your hallway at home...if you are more aware of the risks, you will be more likely to take action.

In the classroom

Our objective in designing this Hazardous House activity is to increase the awareness of students, teachers and families about the risks for falling that may exist in the home and community. We hope that you all will become more aware of the causes of falls and will share the information and ways to reduce the risks of falling with the older adults in your lives.

We have included a photocopy master of the student activity sheet:
The Hazardous House: Finding the Falls Waiting to Happen and the answer key which outlines the hazards for you to review with your students.

There are several ways to use this resource. Some suggested uses are:

- Students can be asked to "circle the hazards" independently.
- Students can work in groups to identify the hazards.
- It can be presented as a game in which students are challenged to identify the hazards in a particular time frame (2-4 minutes).
- It may also be used as a guide for the older students to assess the falls risks in their own homes or those of co-operative grandparents or neighbours.
- You may decide on specific rooms or areas to be assessed by each student as a homework assignment.



Ageing Well Together Falls Prevention

THE HAZARDOUS HOUSE TEACHERS GUIDE

Next Steps...

Many schools are also used for community events and often grandparents are invited to the school for special activities. Students may want to make their school safer for the older adults who visit. Identifying falls hazards in and around the school and then developing solutions to reduce the risks of falling would make a good class project.

Discuss possible actions to improve some hazards - students can be encouraged to suggest improvements that are affordable and realistic.

Want To Do More?

Older students can extend their assessments to the community as a part of their Social Studies curriculum. They can survey public meeting spaces, lighting in parking areas or on streets, sidewalk repairs...the list is endless. They could research how to follow up on their assessments with the municipality, public officials or with landlords. These are all steps that can influence public policy and demonstrate students' ability to take action on unsafe conditions as responsible citizens.

There are many other resources available to develop the work of your students around falls prevention in the home and community. Copies are available from the address below and on our website at www.AgeingWellTogether.ca

We hope you and your students enjoy this activity. Your efforts to increase awareness about this issue are essential to the well being of our communities. Thank you!

For more information contact your local Ageing Well Together Coalition:

Adapted from the resource developed by the Inverness & Victoria Counties & the CBRM Preventing Falls Together Coalitions and the Cape Breton District Health Authority.



Ageing Well Together: Falls Prevention

Resource #18

SENIORS...ARE YOU AT RISK FOR A FALL?

Across

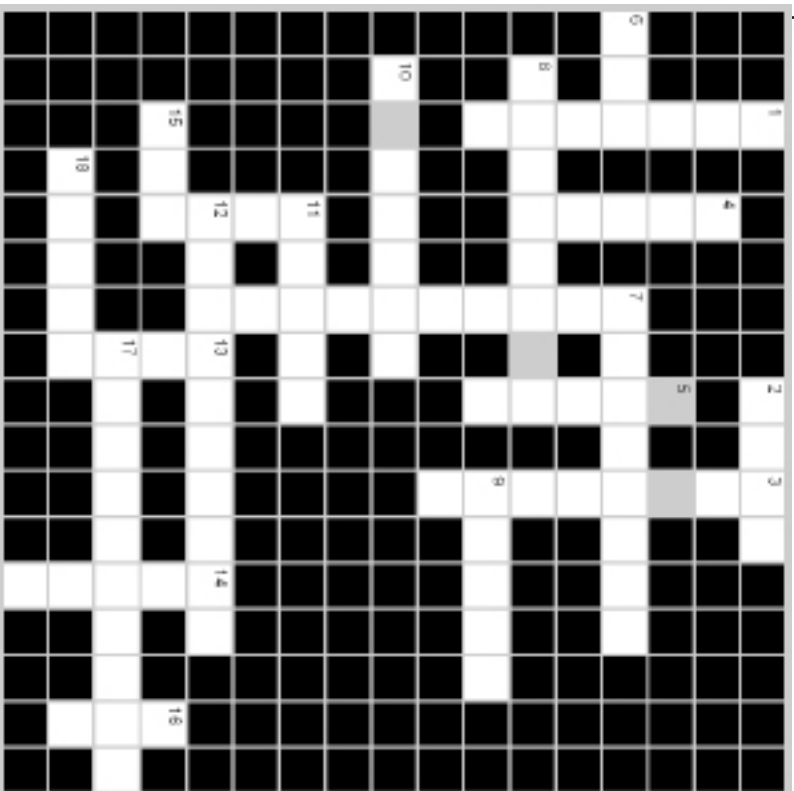
2. Get checked yearly if 65 +
6. Slippery area that needs rubber mat
7. Area of home that should be well lit
8. Assists in stair climbing
9. To help with reaching
10. Get rid of this in your home
11. Tripping hazards
12. Lights your hallway at night
15. Fall hazard in the winter
17. May cause side effects
18. Bed side necessity

Down

1. Safety aide for bathtub
3. Keep fit
4. Winter boots should have this
5. Common cause of injury for seniors
7. Carpet culprit for falls
11. Walking aide
13. Common place for a fall
14. Items for low cupboards
16. Safer type of heel

Using the letters in the shaded boxes complete the following message:

Prevent A Fall! Protect Your Way of _____.



Across: (2) Eyes (6) Tub (7) Stairway (8) Handrail (9) Stool (10) Clutter
 (11) Cords (12) Night Light (15) Ice (17) Medication (18) Phone
 Down: (1) Grab bar (3) Exercise (4) Tread (5) Falls (7) Scatter Rug
 (11) Cane (13) Home (14) Heavy (16) Low

Ageing Well Together thanks the Region of Peel for this puzzle!



Ageing Well Together Falls Prevention

DON'T FALL FOR CHRISTMAS!

Some thoughtful gift ideas for seniors that can help prevent a fall this winter season

Gifts for the home:

- battery operated emergency lights that will activate during a power outage
- plug-in night lights for bathrooms and hallways around the home
- fluorescent tape to mark the edges of steps, thresholds, and other potential trip areas both inside and out
- rubber backed non-slip mats to replace those dangerous scatter rugs
- grab bars for the bathtub, shower, by the toilet, and beside steps
- sturdy railing by all stairways inside and out
- bath chair to make getting into and out of the tub safer
- non-slip mats for inside and outside the tub and shower area
- cordless phone to be kept on or near user
- ice melting compound, kitty litter or sand for outside walks and steps
- sensor lights for outside entry areas
- laundry cart with wheels
- garage door opener

Gifts for your loved one:

- small flashlights for pockets, bedside, beside TV - for power outages
- key chain flashlight to help find the keyhole on their car or home on dark days
- long handled shoehorn to reduce the chance of bending over and losing balance
- long handled reachers for reaching things in high places, instead of climbing
- a sturdy step stool with handrail
- new sneakers for all day indoor use
- 'icers' to fit over outside boots for winter days
- an interesting cane to encourage use around the home
- a metal tipped cane for outside use on icy days
- gift certificate for snow removal, home repair or yard work services
- a set of pre-paid taxi vouchers or coupons for use on snowy or icy days
- a personal emergency response system (e.g. "Lifeline" or "In Touch")
- certificate for exercise program suited to individual's fitness level and age

Don't Fall For Christmas was originally developed by
the Colchester-East Hants Preventing Falls Coalition



FALLS PREVENTION DRAW

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____



FALLS PREVENTION DRAW

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____



FALLS PREVENTION DRAW

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