Older and Wiser: Here's how seniors can prevent falls

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Margaret Coates December 1, 2025

November is Fall Prevention month. Falls can happen to anyone, but the impact for seniors is greater than the rest of the population. | Metro Creative Photo

We're wrapping up November, which is Fall Prevention month. This is a great time for many of us older folks to brush up on our knowledge about falls including the impacts and how we can prevent falls.

Falls can happen to anyone, but the impact for seniors is greater than the rest of the population.

According to the province, it is estimated that one-third of people aged 65 and older fall each year, and these falls are the leading cause of injury-related hospitalization among older adults. Falls can lead to serious injuries, including fractures and head injuries. Falls can impact independence and quality of life.

Falling can be the result of several health-related factors for older people. Older people may develop poor balance and decreased muscle and bone strength, and they may be susceptible to reduced vision or hearing. Older people may develop symptoms of dizziness and weakness, perhaps related to their medications. Also, older people may not be taking the steps to keep their homes safe, to eat well and stay fit.

While falls remain the leading cause of injury-related hospitalizations among older adults in Canada, the encouraging news is that most falls are preventable. If, as is recommended in a Fall Prevention article in McMaster Optimal Age Portal, we concentrate on “empowering ourselves to take simple, proactive steps that support strength, stability, and independence” we can prevent most falls. The fear of falling can have a profound effect on a person as they may curtail their activities, which might lead to other health issues such as depression, anxiety, isolation and physical decline.

Some of the proactive steps we can take include keeping our body moving - perhaps try gentle, consistent activity like walking, swimming, or tai chi which can improve balance and coordination. “Movement keeps muscles strong and reflexes sharp and both are important to preventing falls,” according to an November article posted in the McMaster Optimal Aging Portal.

We can make sure our indoor and outdoor areas are safe. We could remove trip hazards inside and out and make sure to install good handrails and lighting on our staircases. We could also add non-slip treads for bare wooden steps. In our bathrooms, install shower and tub grab bars, and place non-slip mats on the shower floor and bathtub. We should resist using those cute little throw rugs.

November often signals the beginning of those nasty months where older adults encounter weather conditions which can be a problem for them. In preparing for the inclement weather ahead of us this winter, try these steps to prevent falls.

Make sure that you use footwear with good traction, keep your eyes trained on what is before you and, if necessary, and use a walking stick for balance. Be careful getting out of your car, avoid taking shortcuts, take extra time, pay attention, and do not get distracted while outdoors. Keep your driveway and walkways salted and clear.

To prevent falls, stay healthy. Review medications regularly with your healthcare provider or pharmacist and discuss any side effects, such as feeling dizzy or sleepy. Eat a nutritious diet rich in protein, calcium and vitamin D and drink plenty of liquids throughout the day. Keep up your dentist appointments – healthy teeth make eating a range of food easier. Check your eyesight and hearing regularly.

Every step you take toward improving strength, awareness, and home safety helps prevent falls and can prevent falls and help keep you living independently and confidently.

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