

Falling is a very common and serious problem for older persons. All too often, falling results in injuries such as broken bones and cuts, and the need for hospital care and/or nursing home admission. Both the incidence of falling and the severity of fall-related complications rise steadily after about age 60. If you have had even a minor fall, you should tell your doctor. Many times, falling can be prevented by relatively simple interventions, such as adjusting the dose of your medication(s) or even getting new eyeglasses. Your doctor can determine your risk of falling and help you avoid falling in the future.

### Here's What You Can Do:

- Tell your doctor if you have fallen and describe the circumstances of the fall(s).
- Tell your doctor if you have any trouble walking or if you ever feel "off balance."
- Tell your doctor if you have any weakness or other problems with your legs.
- Tell your doctor if you use any walking aids, such as a cane or a walker.
- Tell your doctor about any vision problems and any other medical problems you may have.

Be sure to tell your doctor about all medications you are taking, including "over-the-counter" medications or herbal remedies. Use the form provided in this brochure to write down all your medications. Take this to your next doctor visit.

### Here's What Your Doctor Can Do:

Your doctor can assess your risk of falling by talking with you and performing several simple evaluations. Your doctor can:

- Review your history of falling and all medications you take.
- Evaluate your gait and balance.
- Examine your vision.
- Evaluate the function and strength of your legs.
- Evaluate your cardiovascular status, including heart rate, rhythm, and blood pressure.
- Review your use of walking aids, such as canes and walkers.

After your evaluation, your doctor may make recommendations to help prevent falls. These recommendations could include:

- Modifying or adjusting the dose of your medications.
- Recommending an exercise program with balance training.
- Recommending gait training and training in the proper use of walking aids.
- Correcting any hazards in your home that could contribute to falling, such as loose carpets or poor lighting.
- Treating any cardiovascular disorders, such as heart rhythm abnormalities and low blood pressure.

Use the space below to write down your current medications and take this form with you to your doctor appointments. Also, write down any non-prescription medications you are taking (such as pain medications, supplements, and herbal remedies).

### My Current Medications

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Dose \_\_\_\_\_ When Taken \_\_\_\_\_

## The American Geriatrics Society

The American Geriatrics Society (AGS) is dedicated to improving the health and well-being of older adults. With a membership of over 6,000 health care professionals, the AGS has a long history of improving health care for older adults.

The AGS recently completed a comprehensive study, "The Prevention of Falls in Older Persons." The results of this study have been incorporated into Clinical Practice Guidelines to educate physicians and other health care providers about preventing falls in older persons.

## The Foundation for Health In Aging

The Foundation for Health In Aging builds a bridge between the research and practice of geriatrics health care professionals and the public. We advocate on behalf of older adults and their special needs through public education, clinical research, and public policy.

For more information on fall prevention, please visit the AGS website at:  
[www.americangeriatrics.org](http://www.americangeriatrics.org).

For additional age-related health information, please visit the AGS Foundation for Health in Aging website at:  
[www.healthinaging.org](http://www.healthinaging.org).

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# A Patient's Guide To Preventing Falls

