

Tri County EMS Association Safety Guides



Fall Prevention for Seniors (see Children below)

Health and medication can affect balance, flexibility, and strength.

- Have vision/eyewear prescriptions, and ears/hearing checked regularly.
- Talk to your doctor about drug side effects and interactions with other medications that can cause blurry vision or dizziness.
- Exercise regularly to promote strong bones, flexibility, and balance.

Step smart - watch how and where you walk.

- Wear supportive low-heeled shoes with soles that provide traction. Avoid walking in loose fitting slippers or in socks.
- Be cautious of tripping hazards and slick weather conditions when walking outdoors.
- Carry a small load that you can see over and leave a hand free to grasp railings.
- Avoid walking on uneven or poorly maintained surfaces, along cluttered sidewalks, or in poorly lit places like theaters. Only use stairs with handrails.

Make the stairways and steps safer.

- Securely install handrails on both sides and be sure the rail extends past the last step.
- Always turn on a light in stairways. Have a switch at the top and the bottom of the staircase.
- Maintain floor coverings, tack down carpet edges and keep stairs/steps clear of items.
- Step slowly with your hands free to grasp the rails.

Remove tripping hazards from pathways and living spaces.

- Remove loose area rugs or secure to the floor with double-sided tape.
- Eliminate excess or oversized furniture and objects. Select chairs/sofas with sturdy arms.
- Provide bright, even lighting and be sure you don't have to walk through a dark room to turn on a light. Install night-lights.
- Secure slack in phone and power cords and keep them out of pathways.

In the kitchen...

- Store often-used and heavy products within reach and in low cabinets.
- Only climb on sturdy step stools with handrails to reach - never a stool or chair with wheels.
- Clean up spills immediately.

In the bathroom...

- Use rubber bathmats or non-skid strips in tubs/showers.
- Install at least two grab bars and secure a stool in the tub.
- Use raised toilet seats and/or handrails.
- Wipe up water from the floor immediately.

In the bedroom...

- Have a night-light and/or keep a light or flashlight at your bedside.
- Keep floor free of discarded clothing and pathways free of obstacles.
- Keep a telephone and emergency numbers on a low table in case you fall or can't stand up.

Elsewhere around the house...

- Keep floors clear and pathways free of obstacles.
- Keep a telephone and emergency numbers on low tables in case you fall or can't stand up.

If you should fall...

- Call for 9-1-1 for help.
- Keep warm while waiting for help by covering up with a blanket, coat, or even a rug.
- See a doctor, even if you don't think you are hurt and especially if you don't know why you fell. It could be a sign of illness or a problem with medications.

Fall Prevention - Children

Falls are the leading cause of non-fatal, unintentional injuries and emergency department visits for children younger than 15. Each year in the United States, there are more than 120 fall-related deaths and 2.5 million emergency department visits among this age group. Children less than 5 years old account for more than 50% of both categories.

The majority of fall-related injuries in children ages 0 to 5 years occur at home, most often due to a lack of appropriate supervision. This includes leaving an infant on a changing table or other surface for "just a minute," or allowing a toddler to play in a room with non-secured windows or to be on a balcony with ineffective railing protection. Many infants injured in falls are in the same room as their caregiver.

- Most infant falls are from furniture, stairs, or walkers (*older walkers can pose multiple risks of injury*).
- Most toddler falls are from windows and balconies.
- Most falls involving older children are from bikes, skateboards, scooters, and playground equipment.
- Twice as many fall-related injuries in children aged 5 to 14 years occur at home versus school.

More facts about falls:

- Pediatric falls are associated with the combination of curiosity and lack of motor-skill development (the former generally outpacing the latter), thus children ages 10 and under are at greatest risk for death or serious injury from falls.
- Seventy percent (70%) of pediatric falls occur between noon and early evening during warm weather.
- Most falls from windows involve male children younger than 5 years old, and commonly occur in low-income, high-occupancy, multi-family housing.
- Children living in apartment buildings are more likely to fall from windows than those living in single-family dwellings.
- Apartment/condominium complexes are more likely to have balconies and walkways than houses and duplexes.
- Even railing bars spaced five inches apart can allow small children to slip through.

Child Fall Prevention Tips

Proper supervision is essential:

- NEVER leave children unattended on changing tables, beds, sofas, etc.
- Strap children into highchairs, swings, strollers, etc.
- Don't let children play unattended on balconies, porches, and/or fire escapes.
- Don't let children play near windows or patio doors.

Don't create your own hazards:

- Avoid use of baby walkers on wheels; all baby walkers should meet current [ASTM](#) standards.
- Use safety gates at tops and bottoms of stairs if infants or toddlers are in the home; gates should meet [ASTM](#) standards.
- Move furniture away from windows and draperies.
- Window screens are intended to Keep Bugs Out not Kids In: install [window guards](#) where needed. Use window guards that meet current [ASTM](#) standards for emergency exiting.
- Use slip-resistant mats or stickers in bathtubs.