



# Reduce Your Fall Risk

ADVANTAGE Health Solutions, Inc.

9045 River Road, Suite 200

Indianapolis, IN 46240

[www.advantageplan.com](http://www.advantageplan.com)



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# What can I do to lower my risk of falling?

Take good care of your body. Try to stay healthy by following these tips:

- See your eye doctor once a year. Cataracts and other eye diseases that cause you not to see well can lead to falls.
- Get regular physical activity to keep your bones and muscles strong.
- Take good care of your feet. If you have pain in your feet or if you have large, thick nails and corns, have your doctor look at your feet.
- Talk to your doctor about any side effects you may have from your medications. Problems caused by side effects from medicine are a common cause of falls. The more medicines you take, the greater your risk of falling.
- Talk to your doctor if you have dizzy spells.
- If your doctor suggests that you use a cane or a walker to help you walk, be sure to use it. This will give you extra stability when walking and will help you avoid falls.
- Don't smoke.
- Limit alcohol to no more than 2 drinks per day.
- When you get out of bed in the morning or at night to use the bathroom, sit on the side of the bed for a few minutes before standing up. Your blood pressure takes some time to adjust when you sit up. It may be too low if you get up quickly. This can make you dizzy, and you might lose your balance and fall.

## What else can I do?

Most falls occur in the home. Consider the following tips to make your home safe:

- Make sure that you have good lighting in your home. A well lit home will help you avoid tripping over objects that are not easy to see. Put night lights in your bedroom, hallways, stairs and bathrooms.
- Rugs should be firmly fastened to the floor or have nonskid backing. Loose ends should be tacked down.
- Electrical cords should not be lying on the floor in walking areas.
- Put hand rails in your bathroom for bath, shower and toilet use.
- Have rails on both sides of your stairs for support.
- In the kitchen, make sure items are within easy reach. Don't store things too high or too low. Then you won't have to use a stepladder or a stool to reach them. It's also a good idea to avoid storing things too low, so you won't have to bend down to get them.
- Wear shoes with firm nonskid soles. Avoid wearing loose-fitting slippers that could cause you to trip.

(1). National Institutes of Health: Osteoporosis and Related Bone Disease National Resource Center. *Falls and Related Fractures: The Risk of Under diagnosis*. April 2000.

(2). Michigan Department of Community Health. *Elderly Falls Report*. 2004

(3). Murphy, S.L. *Deaths: final Data for 1998*. National Vital Statistics Reports. Vol. 48 No. 11. Hyattsville (MD): National Center of Health Statistics

(4). Donald, I.P. and Bulpitt, C.J. *The Prognosis of Falls in Elderly People Living at Home*. Age and Ageing. 1999. 28:121-5.