

Protect yourself and maintain your independence:



# You CAN Prevent Falls!

Falls are the leading cause of fatal injuries among San Diego seniors.  
It could happen to you or someone you love.

## A guide to preventing falls

Aging & Independence Services

County of San Diego, Health & Human Services Agency

For more information call (800) 510-2020

[www.SanDiegoFallPrevention.org](http://www.SanDiegoFallPrevention.org)



## Fall Facts

- 1 in 3 older adults (65+) fall each year.
- 60% of falls occur in the home.
- Falls are the #1 reason for nursing home admissions.

Risk factors for falls include:

- *Older adults 85+ and of female gender*
- *Living alone*
- *Poor nutrition and lack of activity*
- *History of falls*

## What Can Be Done?

The good news is that many falls are preventable. Here are some things you can do to reduce your risk:

- *Exercise – focus on strength, balance and flexibility*
- *Review your medications and manage your chronic conditions*
  - *Have your vision checked annually*
- *Make your home safer*

## Exercise

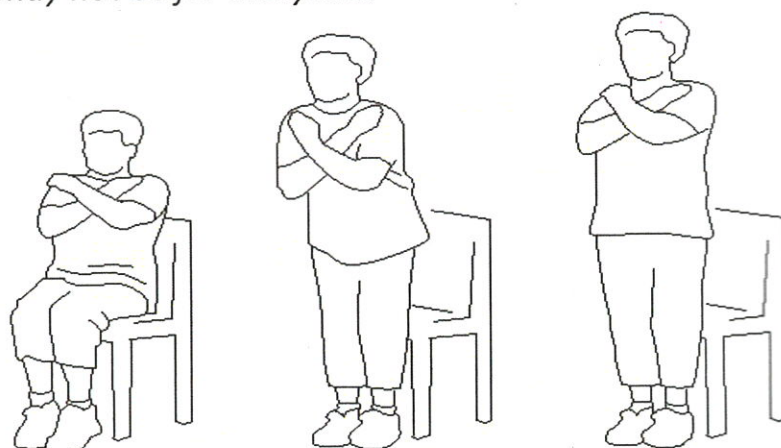
Exercising is proven to be the #1 thing you can do to prevent a fall. This includes strength, balance, and flexibility exercises.

Below is an example of an exercise you can do to reduce your risk of falling:

### Sit to Stand Exercise:

1. Sit in the middle of the chair.
2. Place your hands on the opposite shoulder crossed at the wrists. (If you cannot cross your arms against your chest, you can hold on to the chair too)
3. Keep your feet flat on the floor.
4. Keep your back straight and keep your arms against your chest.
5. Repeat this for 30 seconds.

*\*\*Please check with your doctor as this exercise may not be for everyone.*



## Questions to Ask Your Doctor

### 1. Can my medication contribute to a fall?

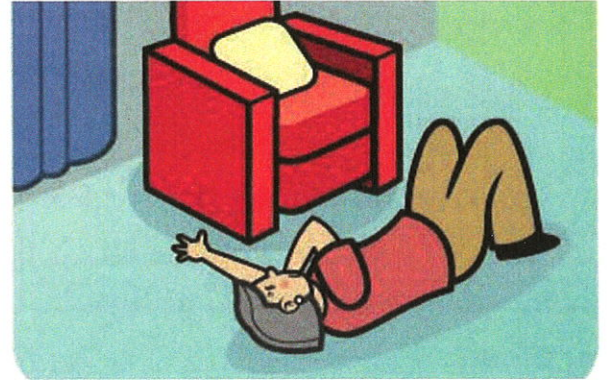
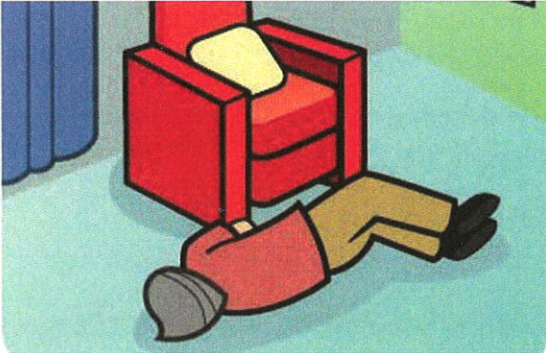
Take all of your current medications and supplements to your physician or pharmacist to review. Ask about possible side effects of combinations of drugs. (Medicine dosage may change over time).

### 2. How can my current health affect my risk of falling?

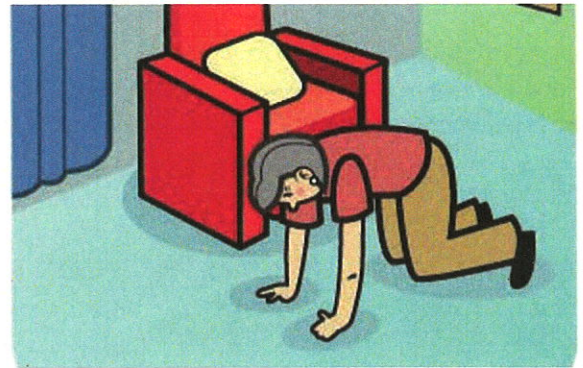
Your doctor can conduct a physical examination to evaluate your functional, neurological, visual, cardiac, and mental health status to determine if you are at an increased risk of falling. Ask for referrals if needed.

# How to Get Up From a Fall

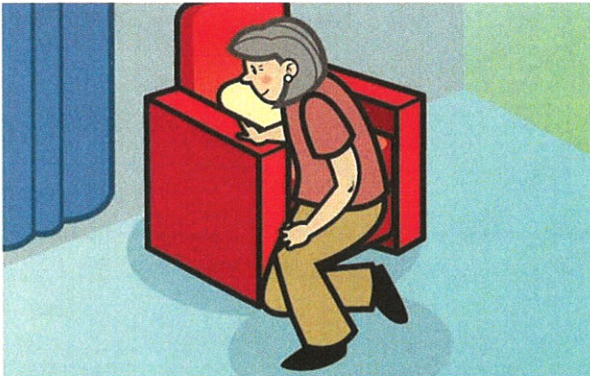
1. Roll over onto the side of your body that hurts the least.
2. Relax and take a minute to see how you feel. If you are in pain, stay where you are and call for help.



3. Pull your knees toward your body, place your hand on the ground in front of your chest, and push yourself into a sitting position.



4. If you can, crawl to a couch or chair, put both hands on the seat, and slowly push yourself up.



5. If one knee feels stronger, bend it, and put your weight on it, as you push yourself up with both arms on the chair.
6. Keep your hands on the chair for support as you slowly turn around and sit on the couch or chair.

## 3. Would I benefit from receiving a referral ?

Such as vision, physical therapy, or occupational therapy? (Referral may not be required for a specialist)

## 4. Should I be taking nutritional supplements?

Make sure you are getting enough calcium and vitamins D & B12 in your diet. Having too little may increase your risk of falling by causing muscle weakness, decreased bone mass, and declining neurological function.

## 5. What type of exercise is most appropriate for me?

Exercise is one of the most important ways to reduce your risk of falling by improving strength, balance, flexibility & bone mass.

# Home Safety Checklist

## Floors

- Clear pathways of furniture, and remove clutter from the floor.
- Remove low chairs that are difficult to sit in and get out of easily.
- Remove throw rugs, and secure carpet edges.
- Gather cords and wires, and tape to a wall.
- Don't use floor wax.

## Stairs and Steps

- Remove all objects from the stairs.
- Fix broken or uneven steps, and secure loose carpet.
- Install handrails on both sides of stairs. Fix any loose handrails.
- Use reflecting tape at the top & bottom of stairs.

## Clothing

- Wear sturdy shoes with thin, non-slip soles.
- Hem pants so they don't touch the floor in bare feet.
- Consider wearing a medical alert device.

## Outdoors

- Repair cracked or uneven sidewalks.
- Trim shrubbery along the path to the door.

## Kitchen

- Keep frequently used items within reach.
- Keep a current list of healthcare information on your refrigerator (Vial of Life).

## Bathrooms

- Use a non-slip rubber mat on the shower or tub floor.
- Install grab bars next to the tub and toilet.
- Install a raised toilet seat.
- Use a padded tub or shower seat.
- Use a handheld shower head.
- Have a low or no-threshold shower.

## Telephones

- Make sure the phone can be reached from the bed and the floor.
- Consider keeping a cordless or cellular phone in your pocket.
- Keep a list of emergency numbers next to each phone.

## Lighting

- Install good lighting by doors & walkways.
- Install lights at top & bottom of stairs.
- Replace burnt out light bulbs.
- Install night lights or motion sensor lights in bathroom, kitchen, and bedroom.