

Fall Prevention

Tips to avoid falls in the home and in the community



When you start having trouble walking it can be painful (physically and emotionally) but more than that, it can be extremely frustrating. Your body isn't cooperating and you can't force it. We know how hard it can be when your walking slows and you're constantly worried about falling. It can be embarrassing and it can feel demeaning to make the hard decision to use a mobility aid. It's important to remember to do what is best for yourself and that includes your mental health. If using a walker is something you are considering because you know it would be helpful but it is too hard for your pride – it may not be that helpful in the end. Do what is best for you.

People with Parkinson disease have an increased risk of falling due to the symptoms of PD – freezing, stiffness, shuffling gait, etc. Experiencing a fall (or frequent falls) can affect a person both physically and psychologically. The following suggestions may help to reduce the risk of falling.

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At Home

- Do not try to do two things at once (e.g. walk and talk, walk and carry laundry)
- Never carry objects with both hands; this can throw you off balance. If you do fall and you have something in both hands, you will have trouble using your arms to help break your fall.
- Make clear, uncluttered paths for walking in the house. Move plants, foot stools, coffee tables and magazine racks out of the way.
- Arrange furniture so that it is easy to get around.

- Clear the floor of throw rugs, electrical cords and anything else that you could trip over. Bare floors are the easiest surfaces to walk on. If you must have carpet in your house, try to have low pile carpet. Watch for small pets or other objects on the ground.
- Install handrails on all stairways and consider installing handrails along hallways.
- Stand with your feet wide apart when doing tasks that challenge your balance or sit down if possible.
- Place small cushions on low chairs to make it easier to get up.
- Arrange the kitchen to minimize your bending and reaching.
- Avoid using step ladders and stools to reach high objects. Ask for help!
- Use a cordless phone to avoid rushing to answer it or use an answering machine for times when getting to the phone is a problem.
- Make sure there is adequate lighting at night.

In the Bathroom

- Install grab bars by the toilet and in the bath/shower. DO NOT use a towel rack as a grab bar – it can't support you!
- Consider using a raised toilet seat as it makes it easier to get on and off the toilet.
- If the bathroom is far from your bedroom, consider a commode or urinal for night-time toileting needs.
- Use non-slip mats in the bathtub and shower and consider using a shower/bath chair.
- Use “soap-on-a-rope” or install a liquid soap dispenser on the wall of the bath/shower. This way you won't have to worry about dropping it.

Outside and in the Community

To keep your balance, pay extra attention in the following situations:

- Uneven or sloping ground including unpredictable surfaces such as grass, sand, pebbles, ice/snow
- Stairs without handrails
- Stepping onto or off of a curb
- Pedestrian crossings on busy streets
- Public transportation
- Crowded malls
- Around children and animals