



Fall Risk Profile

Increase your awareness about inherent fall risk factors

The more inherent risk factors that a person possesses, the more likely their risk of a fall. Some risk factors are stronger predictors of a fall. The total number of stars accumulated is an indication of fall risk. Falls can lead to serious injury and a loss of independence.

1. Contact the appropriate healthcare providers who can help to address your fall risk factors.
2. Complete the home Safety Checklist to make your home a safer place.

3. Don't wait for a fall – Make your home safer today.

1 Being over 85 years old.

About 30% of adults over the age 65 will fall this year. However, people over 85 years old are at the highest risk of falling. Even a minor fall or injury may result in serious consequences. Almost everyone over the age of 85 will fall this year (they just might not tell you about it).

2 Having a fall in the past year.

Learn more on how to reduce your fall risk – there can be many factors involved. These can include home safety risk, medical risks, strength and balance risks and more. Working through the Home Safety Checklist or having an Occupational Therapist complete a home assessment can help reduce fall risks.

3 Advised to use a cane or walker to get around safely.

**

Those who have been advised to use a cane or walker or have mobility challenges, are more likely to fall. Use the walking aid that has been recommended to you. If you feel that a mobility device would be beneficial, consult with your family doctor, a physiotherapist or an occupational therapist about the most appropriate mobility device for your needs.

4 Worried about falling.

*

People who are worried about falling are more likely to fall. In addition, being nervous or afraid of falling causes many adults to limit their activities, social interactions and exercise. This inactivity can lead to muscle weakness, but also greater isolation. Knowing how to prevent a fall can reduce fear and promote active living. Having healthy conversations can also lead to plans for getting help leading to less anxiety.

- 5 Unsteady when walking and use furniture or walls for support.** *
Unsteadiness or needing support while walking are signs of poor balance. Exercise daily to build up your strength and improve your balance, as this is shown to reduce the risk for falls. Talk with a physiotherapist who can assess your strength and balance then recommend specific exercises for you.
- 6 Pushing up with hands to stand up from a chair, toilet, or couch.** ***
This is a sign of weak leg muscles, a major reason for falling. Muscle weakness and reduced physical fitness increases the risk of a fall by four to five times. Exercise daily to build up your strength and improve your balance, as this is shown to reduce the risk for falls. Review the heights of those surfaces that are difficult to rise from and raise them if necessary. Talk to a physiotherapist who can assess your strength and balance then recommend specific exercises or mobility devices for you.
- 7 Consistently needing to rush to the toilet.** *
Rushing to the bathroom, especially at night, increases your chance of falling, and those taking laxatives are twice as likely to fall. Consider a bedside commode or urinal for nighttime. Talk to your primary healthcare provider or incontinence specialist about solutions that decrease the need to rush to the toilet.
- 8 Having foot problems such as corns, bunions, deformities, numbness, or foot pain.** *
Numbness or pain in your feet can contribute to balance and gait difficulties and can lead to falls. Talk to your primary healthcare provider or foot care specialist (podiatrist, chiropodist) about your foot condition. Wearing supportive shoes at home is highly recommended.
- 9 Taking medicine that causes light-headedness or more fatigue than usual.** *
Side effects from medicine can sometimes increase your chance of falling. Talk with your pharmacist or primary healthcare provider about the medication side effects that may increase your risk of falls and some recommended alternatives.
- 10 Vision issues.** **
Decreases in vision can impede a person's ability to walk safely and detect hazards in the environment. Low vision can also affect the ability to maintain balance. Talk to your eye care specialist (optometrist, ophthalmologist) and wear the prescribed corrective glasses. Get your vision and hearing checked annually.
- 11 Difficulty remembering or concentrating on things.** **
People with cognitive impairments or dementia are at a greater risk of falls due to difficulty in anticipating and adapting to environmental stimuli to maintain or restore balance. A state of mental confusion or disorientation,

known as delirium, has been shown to further increase the risk of falls. Talk with your primary healthcare provider about any symptoms you may be experiencing. Consult an occupational therapist for strategies to remain safe at home even with cognitive impairment.

12 Chronic condition that limits my mobility, balance, or strength. (ie. Parkinsons, diabetes, arthritis, kidney disease, COPD, or the effects of a stroke). ***

Chronic conditions often result in physical limitations that affect mobility, gait, and balance. Balance deficits are significantly linked to a risk of falling among older adults. Variability in one's gait is also a risk factor for falling. Talk with your primary healthcare provider about any recommendations for maximizing your mobility, balance, and strength. You might consult a physiotherapist who can assess your strength and balance then recommend specific exercises or mobility devices for you. Consult with a nutritionist or dietitian regarding any persistent nutritional deficiencies.

13 Getting light-headed when standing up, or having episodes of vertigo. **

People who have postural hypotension (blood pressure drops when rising from sitting to standing) or who experience vertigo are at higher risk of falls. When you first stand up, count to 5 before stepping away from your sitting surface. Sit down immediately if you feel dizzy. Discuss with your primary healthcare provider any variations in your blood pressure.

14 Shortness of breath when standing or walking. *

Decreases in endurance or muscle strength can leave a person unable to prevent a slip, trip, or stumble from becoming a fall. Discuss with your health care professional options for managing your shortness of breath. Consider an exercise program to increase your endurance.

15 Acute illnesses (like infections) that cause weakness, pain, fever, nausea, or dizziness. *

The effects of medications taken to treat conditions or symptoms of an acute illness can increase the risk of falling. For example, urinary tract infections are a precipitating factor in approximately 8% of falls. Talk to your primary healthcare provider about minimizing the risk of recurrent infections. They can often provide strategies for reducing the likelihood of these challenges.

16 Low bone mass, osteoporosis, or osteopenia. *

Low bone mass, osteoporosis or osteopenia does not affect the risk of falling, but it does increase the risk of fractures from a fall. Even a minor fall or injury may result in serious consequences. Discuss with your primary healthcare provider any recommendations for preventing bone loss. Review nutrition and supplements that may improve your bone density.