



# Talk with Your Doc About Falls

One way to prevent falls is to speak with your doctor about how to address your risk factors for falling.

**Tell your doctor if you have experienced the following in the last 6 months ...**

- A fall, or a near fall (slip or trip)
- Problems with walking or balance
- Muscle weakness (especially in the legs)
- Loss of feeling or numbness in your legs/feet
- Swelling in your ankles or feet
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Dizzy or lightheaded, passed out or fainted
- Changes in hearing or vision
- Changes in your sleep pattern
- Chronic conditions like diabetes, arthritis or high/low blood pressure
- Felt depressed for an extended period of time
- A fear of falling
- Problems doing daily activities at home (such as bathing or getting dressed)

Other Things to Tell Your Doctor about Yourself:

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Many different factors contribute to falls. In addition to the checklist on page 1, talking with your doctor about medications, assistive devices, and community resources can help avoid injuries due to falls.

## MEDICATIONS

- Medications often have side effects such as dizziness, lightheadedness, drop in blood pressure, or confusion. All of these can put you at a greater risk for falling.
- When you go to see your doctor, bring along your medications in a bag to be reviewed (even those prescribed by another doctor). Make a list of what you're taking and check which of the following you take:
  - Prescription medications
  - Daily vitamins or herbal supplements
  - Over-the-counter products (such as aspirin and cold medicine)
  - Products to stop smoking
  - Weight loss products
- Tell your doctor if you have experienced dizziness or unsteadiness due to medication, whether it's when you're sitting down, standing up, or both.

## Assistive Devices

- If you have difficulty keeping your balance while walking, ask your doctor if an assistive device or hip protectors can help you.
- If you use an assistive device already, be sure to tell your doctor. For example:
  - One-point cane
  - Quad-cane (the base has 4 feet)
  - Walkers (4-wheel, 2-wheel, or pick-up)
  - Crutches
  - Wheelchair or scooter

## Referrals

- Sometimes other health care professionals can give you specialized information to help lower your risk of falling. These include: pharmacist, optometrist (eyes), podiatrist (feet), physical therapist, or occupational therapist. Ask your doctor for a referral.
- Your doctor may know about community resources like exercise classes that may increase your level of physical activity and reduce your risk of falling.

During your appointment, be sure to ask your doctor the questions on page 4 to learn more about different ways to reduce your fall risk. →

## Questions to Ask Your Doctor

- Can you give me a referral to get my vision checked?
- Can you tell me which of my medications may increase my risk of falling?
- Are there assistive devices that would be appropriate for me?
- What types of physical activity would be appropriate for me?
- Can you give me a referral to an occupational therapist for a home assessment to reduce my risk of falls at home?
- Are there community resources or classes that could help reduce my risk for falling?

Notes:

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For more information, visit [www.stopfalls.org](http://www.stopfalls.org), call (213) 740-1364, or email [info@stopfalls.org](mailto:info@stopfalls.org). Last updated: June 2010.