



Vision Loss and Fall Risk

Understanding How Changes in Vision
Increase the Risk of Falls

Did You Know:

- Individuals with vision problems are more than twice as likely to fall as people without vision problems.
- Vision problems can affect balance, the ability to walk, and upper and lower body strength.

How Vision Loss Increases Fall Risk:

Eye diseases (such as glaucoma, cataracts, macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy) and normal age-related vision changes can cause:

Vision Problems

- Blurry or distorted vision
- Sensitivity to bright lights/glare
- Difficulty seeing objects
- Problems seeing edges and changes in surfaces
- Difficulty seeing at night
- Problems judging depth and distances

Effects of Vision Loss

- Difficulty maintaining balance
- Shuffling or problems walking
- Difficulty seeing clutter or obstacles

- Difficulty going up and down stairs, steps, and curbs
- Reduced activity, leading to decreased strength and balance

Ways to Reduce Vision-Related Fall Risks:

- Have eye check-ups at least once a year and whenever your vision changes.
- Share concerns you have about your vision with your doctor.
- If you wear glasses or contact lenses, make sure your prescriptions are up-to-date.
- Check your home for safety hazards and make necessary changes:
 - Adjust lighting so it is bright enough to see, but does not cause glare.
 - Mark edges of stairs with bright high-contrast strips or paint.
 - Keep floors clear of clutter; secure throw rugs and electrical cords.
 - Add nightlights to the path from bedroom to bathroom.
 - Keep frequently used items close by.
- If you wear eyeglasses and still have trouble seeing, ask your doctor about low vision services.

This fact sheet was created by the Fall Prevention Center of Excellence, supported by the Archstone Foundation. For more information, visit www.stopfalls.org or email info@stopfalls.org. Last updated: September 2012.

