

Fall Risk Factors

Falls and unsteady gait lead to more than one million fractures each year. Unintentional injuries, predominantly caused by falls, are the sixth leading cause of death in persons over 65 years of age. Fear of falling and difficult ambulation greatly limit freedom of movement, and therefore, limit quality of life, for 25 to 40 percent of persons over 65.

Fall Risk Factors include:

- Medications (especially sedatives)
- Weakness and loss of feeling in the feet and legs
- Sudden drop in blood pressure with position change from sitting to standing ("postural hypotension")
- Vision problems
- Lessened bone density (osteoporosis)
- An unusual balance or step pattern
- Dizziness
- Alcohol use
- Environmental hazards (scatter rugs, stairs, pets, slippery bathtubs or showers, furniture placement and spills)
- Mental changes
- Neurological diseases such as Parkinson's disease or stroke
- Any health change resulting in illness

Common age-related changes that can affect your stability include:

- Shorter step length
- Improper footwear
- Increased time spent with both feet on the ground
- More tendency to sway
- Visual changes
- Slower reactions to position changes

Often it is not just one, but some combination of the above factors that causes a person to fall. However, there are things you can do to lessen your risk. For tips, consult the SeniorNavigator article on [Fall Prevention](#).

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