



Humber River Regional Hospital

The First Step: Falls Prevention Starts with You.



A booklet for North York,
Etobicoke-York and
York Region Seniors

HR
Humber River
REGIONAL HOSPITAL

Proud of our diversity. Proud of our care.

Acknowledgements

We at Humber River Regional Hospital wish to extend our thanks to the **Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox & Addington Falls Prevention Coalition** for their support in our reproduction of their booklet. We have reproduced this material to benefit the livelihoods and wellbeing of our patients in our surrounding communities. On behalf of our patients and their families, we express our appreciation for this valuable information.

Disclaimer:

This material is intended to provide you with general information. It does not take the place of services provided by a health care professional.

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This booklet was adapted from the Burnaby Coalition to Prevent Falls, Simon Fraser Health Region."



Introduction

Injuries from falls have been identified as the leading cause of hospital admissions due to injury in Ontario. As we age we are particularly at risk of having a fall. One in every three people over the age of 65, will have a fall this year. A fall can cause an injury that might seriously impair your ability to live independently. Forty per cent of all nursing home admissions can be directly related to a fall. Falls are **predictable and preventable**.

Do you know what is putting you at risk for a fall?

Research shows that there are more than 20 risk factors linked to falls. These risks can be reduced through awareness and simple changes. This booklet will help you see what is putting you at risk and what you can do to prevent a fall. It suggests:

- What you can do
- Where to go
- Who to phone

How to take your "First Step" to prevent yourself from falling

1. Answer the "Fall Risk Questions" on pages 4 and 5
2. For each question answered "yes", go to the section that applies
3. Put a check mark beside every item that applies to you.
4. Complete the "My First Steps Plan to Prevent Falls" on page 28


Take control now to stay on your feet.


Fall Risk Questions

Do you...	Circle "Yes" or "No"		If "Yes" go to page...
1. Ever feel dizzy?	Yes	No	6 Dizziness
2. Take 3 or more medications?	Yes	No	7 Medication Use
3. Drink alcohol frequently?	Yes	No	8 Alcohol Use
4. Have foot problems?	Yes	No	9 Foot Problems
5. Have weak muscles or stiff joints?	Yes	No	10-11 Muscles/Joints
6. Have to rush to the bathroom?	Yes	No	12-13 Continence
7. Have vision and/or hearing difficulties?	Yes	No	14-16 Vision and Hearing
8. Have trouble breathing?	Yes	No	17 Troubled Breathing


Fall Risk Questions



Do You...	Circle “Yes” or “No”		If “Yes” go to page...
9. Have trouble sleeping?	Yes	No	18-19 Trouble Sleeping
10. Experience difficulty concentrating?	Yes	No	20-21 Trouble Concentrating
11. Neglect to regularly check for safety hazards in and around the home?	Yes	No	22-23 Hazards in Your Home
12. Walk in places that are uneven, slippery or icy?	Yes	No	24 Hazards Outdoors
13. Have difficulty keeping your balance?	Yes	No	25-26 Keeping your Balance
14. Have frequent slips, trips, near falls or falls?	Yes	No	Please read the complete booklet and speak to your doctor.
15. Notice a recent unexpected change in your ability to function?	Yes	No	Speak to your doctor.

What can cause Dizziness?	What can you do?	Where to go? Who to phone?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing up quickly from a chair • Getting up quickly from lying down • Low blood pressure • High blood pressure • Medication side effects • Inner ear problems • Poor eating habits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss your symptoms with your family doctor. Your symptoms may warrant a referral to an Ear, Nose and Throat Specialist • Sit on the side of the bed for a few minutes before you stand up • After standing, pause and take one slow deep breath before you take a step • Have your blood pressure checked regularly • Tell your doctor if your medication is making you drowsy or dizzy • Do not go any longer than four hours without eating during the day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask your nurse, pharmacist or doctor about having your blood pressure checked. 

What can cause Medication concerns?	What can you do?	Where to go? Who to phone?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking non-prescription medications, herbal remedies or alcohol with prescription medications • Using someone else's medications • Not being sure what medications you are taking, how many you should take and why you need to take them • Using outdated medications • Your doctor may not be aware of all the medications you are taking • Your doctor may not be aware of the side effects you have experienced • Taking several medications may increase the risk of drug interactions that can cause side effects such as dizziness <p>Myth: "A pill will cure all ills."</p> <p>Fact: More medication is not always better.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never borrow medication from others • Keep an updated list of your medications in your wallet or purse and on the fridge • Ask your doctor or pharmacist before taking any over-the-counter medications, herbal remedies or alcohol with prescription medications • Review your medications with your doctor at least every six months and whenever any medication is added or stopped • Ask your pharmacist about medication side effects and possible drug interactions before taking any medication • Use the same pharmacy all the time • Take outdated or unused medications to the pharmacy for disposal. Do not dispose in the toilet or garbage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist with any questions or concerns about your medications. 

What can cause Overuse of Alcohol?	What can you do?	Where to go? Who to Phone?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using alcohol to aid sleep. Alcohol is a central nervous system depressant, which disturbs normal sleeping patterns. • Using alcohol to relieve aches and pains (alcohol can cause greater aches) • Loneliness • Sadness or depression • Grief and loss • Boredom • Stressful situations <div data-bbox="134 1089 254 1317"> </div> <p>Myth: "Alcohol tolerance is the same throughout life."</p> <p>Fact: Aging decreases your alcohol tolerance and can cause major health problems.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record how much and why you are using alcohol • Learn how your body responds differently to alcohol with age • Share your feelings with someone you trust such as a family member, friend or seniors' peer counsellor • If you are feeling sad or nervous, do not feel like eating or start losing interest in your activities, talk with your doctor, a nurse or a counsellor • Join a community group or activity • Tell your doctor about your aches and pains and discuss ways to manage the problem • Talk with organizations or groups that are trained to counsel on alcohol misuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to your family doctor • Call Community Outreach Programs in Addictions (COPA) 416-516-2982 for seniors 55+ with substance misuse problems and mental health problems <div data-bbox="1486 850 1896 992"> </div>



What can cause Foot Problems	What can you do?	Where to go? Who to phone?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poorly fitting shoes, slippers or boots • Shoes with high, narrow heels, slippery soles, "sticky" soles or poor support • Swollen feet • Untreated foot problems like calluses, bunions, corns, untrimmed or ingrown toenails • Poor posture • Some conditions such as diabetes and poor circulation can cause loss of feeling in your feet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear proper fitting supportive shoes with low broad heels • Make sure your footwear is in good repair • Talk with a foot specialist about calluses, bunions, corns or ingrown toenails. Corn plasters are not recommended for people with diabetes, heart or blood vessel disease • If your shoes are loose, and you can't afford a new pair, buy insoles or wear extra socks • DO NOT wear socks on linoleum or tiled flooring • Buy slippers that fit properly and are enclosed around the heels • Wear loose socks or stockings. Knee highs can cut off your circulation in your legs and numb your feet • If your feet are swollen, put them up when sitting or lying down • See a professional foot care specialist every 4-5 weeks for toenail cutting if you can't do it yourself <p><i>"Those comfortable shoes are now worn out, throw them out."</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk with your doctor, pharmacist or a podiatrist • Foot Specialist- refer to Podiatrist or Chiropodists in the Yellow pages or ask your doctor • Shoes- repair or custom fit. Refer to Yellow pages or ask your doctor about footwear services • Refer to Foot Appliances and Foot Care in Yellow Pages • For posture problems, talk to your doctor about a referral to a physiotherapist or occupational therapist • Foot Care Resources- Call your local CCAC Etobicoke/ York- 416-626-2222 North York: 416-222-2241 York Region-1-888-470-2222 • Contact Canadian Diabetes Association Toronto branch- 416-363-0177 York Region- 416-363-0177

What causes weak muscles and stiff joints?	What can you do?	Where to go? Who to phone?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of physical activity, including not walking • Unresolved injury, pain or discomfort 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk with your doctor before beginning a new physical activity or program • Plan regular physical activity and gradually increase it • Join an exercise or fitness program • Join a specialized program helping those with osteoporosis • See a physiotherapist or kinesiologist for specialized exercises • Contact local support groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you need a cane, walker or wheelchair, ask your doctor for a referral to a physiotherapist or occupational therapist. There is funding for many aids through the Assistive Devices Program. Call your local Community Care Access Centre for information. North York: 416-222-2241 Etobicoke York: 416-626-2222 York Region: 1-888-470-2222 • Private physiotherapy clinics in the Yellow Pages. No referral needed, but talk to your doctor before making an appointment. There may be fees. • If cannot come to outpatient therapy services call Community Care Access Centre: Etobicoke York: 416-626-2222 North York: 416-222-2241 York Region: 1-888-470-2222 • Massage therapy: see Yellow Pages


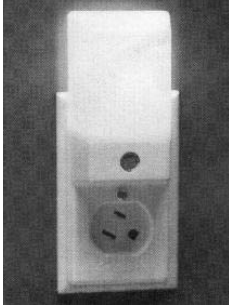
What causes weak Muscles and Stiff Joints?	What can you do?	Where to go? Who to phone?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conditions affecting the muscles and joints such as arthritis, osteoporosis, Parkinson's, stroke and some neurological conditions • Tight muscles • Overdoing physical exercise, without building up to it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to your doctor, nurse, occupational therapist or physiotherapist about your discomfort, pain or soreness • Write all the information down before visiting your health care professional. Include when it occurs, what makes it worse and what relieves it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ontario Arthritis Society Information Line 1-800-321-1433 • Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario Toll Free: 1-888-473-4636 • Parkinson's Society of Canada: 416-227-1200 • Contact your local recreation department for information on programs for seniors or check your local community recreation guide.







Haliburton Seniors take in a Tai Chi class in Haliburton's Head Lake park.


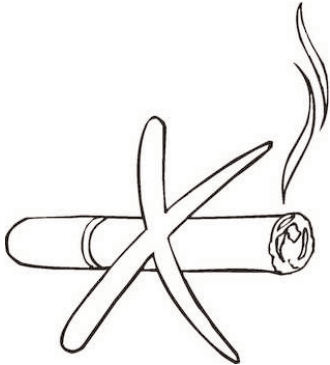
What can cause changes in Bladder and Bowel Control?	What can you do?	Where to go? Who to phone?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weakness of muscles controlling urine flow • Recent changes in your normal eating and drinking routine • Infection • Prostate problems • Constipation can contribute to bladder problems • Caffeine and alcohol irritate the bladder • Not drinking enough fluid can irritate the bladder • Difficulty getting to the bathroom on time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to your doctor • Go to the bathroom before going to bed • Limit or avoid beverages that contain caffeine • To avoid constipation- eat a high-fibre diet (vegetables, fruit, whole grains), drink plenty of fluids and exercise • Drink enough fluids so that your urine is light yellow in colour. Not drinking enough fluids may cause irritation to the bladder and a urinary tract infection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk with your family doctor or nurse about resources available in your area • Canadian Continence Foundation. Call 1-800-265-9575 for free information • Refer to Yellow Pages under Pharmacies or Hospital Equipment and Supplies for incontinence products 


What can cause changes in bladder and bowel control?	What you can do	Where to go or who to phone
<div data-bbox="138 293 283 565" data-label="Image"> </div> <p data-bbox="323 337 619 500"><i>Myth: along with aging comes loss of bladder and bowel control.</i></p> <p data-bbox="157 508 609 670"><i>Fact: Loss of bladder or bowel control is not a normal part of aging.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="682 293 1415 456">• Talk to your doctor, nurse or physio-therapist about treatment and exercises, i.e. kegal, to strengthen the muscles that control urine flow <li data-bbox="682 508 1415 797">• See your doctor about any changes in bladder or bowel control. Tell your doctor about any blood in your urine, foul smelling urine, difficulty or pain urinating, urinary frequency, difficulty getting to the bathroom on time, constipation or diarrhea <li data-bbox="682 849 1415 967">• Install a properly secured grab bar by the toilet. Do not use towel rack or toilet tissue holders for balance and support <div data-bbox="827 1029 1211 1360" data-label="Image"> </div>	<p data-bbox="1444 293 1669 334">See page 12.</p>


What can cause Vision Difficulties?	What can you do?	Where to go? Who to phone?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dirty or scratched eyeglasses • Eyes become sensitive to glaring light with age • Prescription for glasses need to be changed • Getting used to bifocals • Low lighting causes eye strain • Diseases of the eye such as cataracts, glaucoma, infections, or age-related macular degeneration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean glasses regularly. Use a non-glare cleaner and soft cloth. • Wear sunglasses when in the sun • Pause and give your eyes time to adapt to changes in light • Use good lighting and colour contrast in halls, stairways and bathrooms • Use night lights • Maintain good diabetic control • Bifocals- do not look through lower part of glasses when going up or downstairs. Tilt your head down to use upper part of glasses • Remove reading glasses when walking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call your Optometrist or Ophthalmologist. Both are covered by OHIP for a yearly eye exam if over 65 years of age. You will need a referral from your doctor for an Ophthalmologist. • Canadian Diabetes Association provides information and support for people with diabetes. Toronto branch: 416-363-0177 • Canadian National Institute for the Blind provides information, rehabilitation, support and devices for people who are blind or visually impaired. Toronto: 416-486-2500 York Region: 905-883-8854

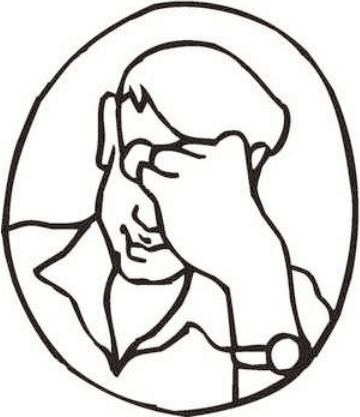

What can cause Vision Difficulties	What can you do?	Where to go? Who to phone?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diseases that affect eyesight such as diabetes • Some medications may affect your vision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check eyesight at the optometrist or ophthalmologist once a year • Remove clutter from walkways • Make sure rugs are non-skid • Make sure electrical cords are taped down • Stairways- mark the first and last step with brightly coloured tape or paint • When carrying packages, don't block your view and keep one hand free to help with balance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearing Our Path, a manual that gives guidelines and recommendations on how to create an accessible environment for persons who are blind or visually impaired, can be purchased from CNIB. Toronto CNIB- 416-486-2500 York Region- 905-883-8854 <div data-bbox="1438 737 1885 912">  <p>The Canadian National Institute for the Blind Library for the Blind</p> </div>


What can cause Hearing Difficulties?	What can you do?	Where to go? Who to phone?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wax build-up in the ear • Dirty hearing aids • Old batteries in the hearing aids • Hearing aids that are no longer appropriate for your hearing loss • Inner ear problems • Conditions such as Tinnitus (ringing or buzzing in the ears) or Menieres disease 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you think you have a wax build-up in your ear, talk to your doctor • Talk to your doctor if you experience a decrease in your hearing. You may need to be referred to an Ear, Nose and Throat Specialist or an audiologist who will assess your hearing • Learn the proper care for your hearing aid • Clean your hearing aids often and check batteries regularly • In a public place, try to sit in a corner to reduce excess noise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canadian Hearing Society provides information, education, counselling and support to those with hearing loss and to their families and caregivers. They also demonstrate and sell specialized technical and assistive hearing devices to enhance hearing, security and independence Toronto branch: 416-928-2500 York Region: 905-715-7511 • Government funding for hearing aids and devices may be available to you through the Assistive Devices Program (ADP). Ask your health care professional or call ADP 1-800-268-6021 • Hearing Care Counselling Program Toronto: 416-928-2500 York Region: 905-715-7511

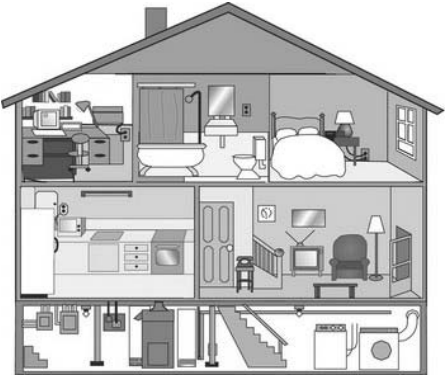
What can cause trouble Breathing?	What can you do?	Where to go? Who to phone?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smoking • Lack of physical activity • Obesity • Pollution • Lung infections or chronic diseases such as asthma, bronchitis and emphysema • Allergies • Heart problems such as congestive heart failure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk with your doctor about shortness of breath. Be prepared to discuss when it happens and how it limits your activities • Talk with your doctor, nurse or occupational therapist about learning to balance your activity with rest and ways to conserve energy • Get your annual flu shot and the one time only pneumonia vaccine to prevent severe respiratory infections • Cut down or stop smoking with help from family, friends or education and support programs • Try to stay away from places where air is polluted (such as smoking areas) • Try to limit your outdoor activities during a poor air quality warning • Eat healthy nutritional meals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk with your doctor • The Lung association has information about respiratory health and lung diseases. Call the Lung Health Information Line 1-800-972-2636 • Asthma Action Helpline 1-800-668-7682 

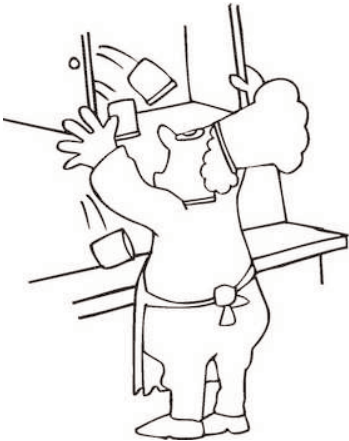
What can cause trouble Sleeping?	What can you do?	Where to go? Who to phone?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of physical activity • Poor sleeping environment • Lack of sunlight • Caffeine, i.e. coffee, tea, cola or chocolate in the evening • Napping in the late afternoon and early evening • Stress • Feeling nervous, anxious or worried • Sadness or depression • Medication and alcohol use • Needing to go to the bathroom frequently 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you can't sleep within 20-40 minutes after going to bed, get up and do something like read a book or listen to music • Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day • Avoid food and drinks with caffeine and alcohol before going to bed. Try warm milk instead • Do not nap in late afternoon or early evening • Keep bedroom cool and quiet • Ensure mattress is firm and comfortable • Learn relaxation techniques 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk with your doctor about sleeping problems.


What can cause trouble Sleeping Difficulty?	What can you do?	Where to go? Who to phone?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age-related tolerance to sleeping pills • Aches and pains • Grief and loss • Shortness of breath when lying on your back, flat in bed • Sleep Apnea- a condition where breathing stops during sleep. This can cause excessive snoring and make you feel sleepy all the time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be active during the day • Limit alcohol as it reduces the amount of restful sleep you get • Try to walk outside for 20 minutes a day • Talk to someone you trust about feeling anxious or sad • Use pillows to prop you up in bed to help you breathe better 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist

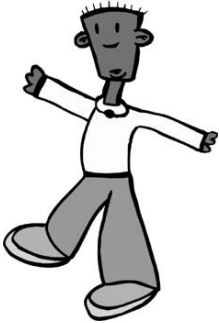

What can cause trouble Concentrating?	What can you do?	Where to go? Who to phone?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chronic or acute pain • Continually feeling rushed or stressed • Fear of falling • Poor appetite or not eating a well-balanced diet • Feeling nervous or anxious 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow down, plan ahead, rest when tired, always give yourself more time to get to places or get things done • Stay active both physically and mentally- <i>Use it or lose it!</i> • Eat regularly to prevent physical weakness and mental sluggishness • Write down activities that need to be done during the day. In order to remind yourself of these activities you may want to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) post a list in the same place e.g. on the refrigerator or near the phone (b) keep a journal (c) use a calendar with large spaces • Talk with someone you can trust about feeling anxious or sad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist. • Talk to your local community access Centre(CACC) about options for socializing and support as well as ways to keep your mind and body active • Etobicoke/ York CCAC: 416-626-2222 • North York: 416-222-2241 • York Region: 1-888-470-2222 


What can cause trouble Concentrating?	What can you do?	Where to go? Who to phone?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling sad, lonely or depressed • Worrying about poor memory or memory gaps • Grief and loss • Medications (e.g. sleeping pills or pills for anxiety) • Not keeping mentally active- if you don't use it you lose it! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk with your doctor, nurse or occupational therapist about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • loss of appetite • loss of interest in activities • difficulty sleeping • sleeping too much • discomfort • difficulty in remembering things • Mental exercise aerobics, such as playing games, doing puzzles, crosswords or word search puzzles etc. • Look into the special telephone that prompts you for appointments, medications and other important information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to your doctor to see if you are eligible for a referral to a geriatric psychiatry service for consultation assessment, treatment and follow-up • Bereavement: Bayview North York Community Centre Hospice: 416-385-8885 Etobicoke/York: Dorthy Ley Hospice: 416-626-0116 York Region Palliative Care Network: 905-895-3628 ext. 294

What can be hazardous around the home?	What can you do?	Where to go? Who to phone?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rushing/inattentiveness • Slippery bathtubs, wet floors or walkways • Poor lighting • Clutter (phone or electrical cords, shoes, pet dishes, papers, etc.) • Chairs and toilet seats, which are too low and hard to get up from • Climbing on chairs or stools • Loose carpets, scatter rugs • Poor furniture arrangement, e.g. not enough space if using walking aids 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use skid-proof or non-slip mats in bathrooms, especially in bathtub • Remove all loose carpets • Install handrails for all stairs inside and outside the house, and grab bars in the bathroom • Use non-slip wax on floors • Wipe up spills promptly and leave something to remind you a floor is wet • Fix or mark uneven floors • Keep a night light on near the bathroom, bed and hallways • Use non glare bulbs that are 100 watts or greater • Buy a cordless phone to carry with you • Store heavy objects on lower shelves • Ask an occupational therapist or physio-therapist about having your favourite chair raised slightly on a platform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a family member or handyman tack down carpets, reroute electrical cords or install handrails • Canada Mortgage and Housing provides financial assistance to people with low income to pay for adaptations to their homes. Call 1-800-704-6488 • March of Dimes Home and Vehicle Modification Program helps facilitate safe, independent living for adults with physical disabilities. Funding may be available for modifications to homes and vehicles Call 1-877-369-4867

What can be hazardous around the home?	What you can do?	Where to go? Who to phone?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reaching for high objects • Bending over to reach low objects • Stairs and bathrooms without secure handholds • Clothing that is too long can trip you, e.g. nightgowns, dressing gowns, baggy pants that drag • Floppy ill-fitting slippers such as crocheted slippers • Pets you may trip over 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase a raised toilet seat • Install grab bars where needed • Keep all walkways clear of clutter • Tack down all carpets. Remove scatter rugs • Do not stand on ladder, chair, or stool. Store items on easy to reach shelves, counter level, or below shoulder height • Buy a long handled "reacher" at medical supply store • Take your time, especially when carrying objects • Change arrangement of your furniture to open up the space. This is especially important if using walking aids • Watch out for sleeping pets • Install grab bars to assist getting up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veterans Affairs Canada offers services and benefits to qualified veterans, their dependents or survivors i.e. therapy assessment and treatment, transportation, home adaptations, medical equipment, grounds keeping. Call 1-866-522-2122 French: 1-866-522-2022 • You may be eligible for a therapist to assess you in your home for safety. Call: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Etobicoke York CACC 416-626-2222 • North York CACC 416-222-2241 • York Region CCAC: 1-888-470-2222 • Medical supplies have safety equipment for your home. Check the Yellow Pages under Home Health Services and Supplies or Hospital Equipment and Supplies.

What can be hazardous outdoors?	What can you do?	Where to go? Who to phone?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rushing or poor concentration • Carrying too much can cause a loss of balance or block vision • Walking on uneven ground • Wet leaves or fallen branches • Snow, ice, or water puddles • Raised cracked sidewalks • Improper footwear for the type of weather • Getting on and off buses • Poor outdoor lighting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to avoid walking on wet leaves, snow or ice • Walk slowly and pay attention • Use walking aids as ordered for you by a health professional • Keep your centre of gravity over your feet- avoid reaching or twisting when walking and standing. Keep one hand free for your balance • Use a waist belt pack or backpack instead of carrying a purse • Avoid carrying heavy items. Use a delivery service or a portable folding cart • Install automatic or timed lighting outside 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call the City of Toronto or local municipal government to report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sidewalk safety hazards • any fall you may have sustained as a result of a sidewalk hazard

What Can Affect your Balance?	What can you do?	Where to go? Who to phone?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting up too quickly • Lack of physical activity • Poor vision • Alcohol and/or medication misuse • Poor footwear • Not using the correct walking aids • Lack of sleep • Not eating enough • Medical conditions that affect how your muscles or nerves react. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take your time • Try exercises such as Tai Chi, to improve balance • Read pages 9-11 in this booklet • Avoid alcohol • Wear proper fitting footwear • Use recommended walking aids • Eat regular well-balanced meals to give yourself energy • Use corrective lenses for poor vision • Talk with support groups such as the Diabetes Association 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss your balance problems with your family doctor • Talk with your doctor about physiotherapy services • Community Rehabilitation Services in your home. Physiotherapy and occupational therapy are provided for people who are unable to get to clinics. Call: Etobicoke York CCAC 416-626-2222 North York CCAC 416-222-2241 York Region CCAC 1-888-470-2222 • Physiotherapy clinics are listed in the Yellow Pages. You may wish to discuss this with your doctor

What can affect your Balance?	What can you do?	Where to go? Who to phone?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical conditions that affect your inner ear • Medical conditions that can affect one or more of your senses (hearing, sight, touch, smell, taste) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk with your doctor about any conditions you may have and what can help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local medical suppliers have walking aids in their showrooms. You should be assessed by a therapist before making a purchase • Government funding for mobility devices (such as speciality canes, walkers, wheelchairs) may be available to you through the Assistive Devices Program (ADP). Assessment by an ADP registered therapist is required. Call 1-800-268-6021 • Canadian Diabetes Association provides information and support for people with diabetes 1-800-226-8464

Talking to Your Doctor About Your Concerns

Falling, slipping and tripping are not normal. You need to find out why this is happening and how to protect yourself. You know yourself best, so you need to be able to tell your doctor clearly about your concerns. Trust and comfort are essential for a good patient-doctor relationship. You can do your part by following these suggestions.

- List your concerns on paper in order of "what is most important" before going to the doctor's office
- Make sure you understand what you are asking the doctor to help you with. Be clear.
- When making your appointment, tell the receptionist if you think you will need a longer time to speak with the doctor about your concerns.
- If you are not clear about the medical treatment plan, (e.g. tests, medications, therapists) ask that it be written down or re-stated. It is not unusual to forget or miss something the doctor tells you because you may be feeling stressed at the time. Take a friend or translator.
- Don't be afraid to speak up for yourself. Tell your doctor if "the plan" or "treatment" is not working. Don't think that "maybe it will work eventually."
- Keep a diary of medications and concerns, and take this with you.
- Ask for resources (e.g. brochures, videos).
- Do not stop any medication without consulting a health professional
- If you do not hear well or have difficulty understanding information, take someone with you to your doctor's appointments.



My First Steps to Prevent Falls

My Greatest Risk(s)	I Will Do:	I Have Done:	Reviewed at:			
			3 mo	6 mo	9 mo	1 yr

How can I best prepare in case I do fall?

Getting help quickly after a fall is very important. It can reduce the chance of needing hospital admission and it can reduce the risk of death.

Medical alarm or response systems can get you help quickly. These devices are worn around your neck or on your wrist. When you push a button, an operator at the monitoring station is alerted and will send help right away.

Check the yellow pages under Medical Alarms for a service in your area.

Sample services in our area are:

First Call Personal Response Services: 416-516-0088

Lifeline: 1-800-543-3546



Cordless phones or cell phones can go to different rooms in your home or outside with you.

Call 9-1-1. Do not be embarrassed. Firefighters are community helpers and will help you.



What to do if you fall - Plan of action

1. Rest. Falling is a shock.
2. Think about your next move.
3. **Are you hurt or unable to get up?**

YES

Plan One - comfort plan

1. **Attract attention**
 - Use your medical or personal alarm.
 - Try to shuffle to the phone.
 - Bang on the wall or floor or use a stick to wave at the window.
 - Shout for help.
2. **Keep warm**
 - Use bedding, coat or tablecloth to cover your feet and legs.
3. **Keep moving**
 - This helps to relieve pressure areas.
 - Keep your feet and hands moving to help circulation.
4. **Bladder control**
 - If your bladder "lets go" while on the floor - move away from the damp area.

NO

Plan Two - Get up from the floor



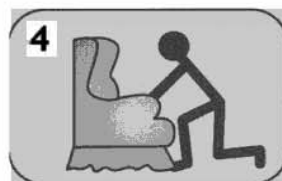
Roll onto your side. Push up into sitting position.



Turn onto your hands and knees. Crawl to the nearest suitable furniture. e.g. bed, chair, sturdy stool.



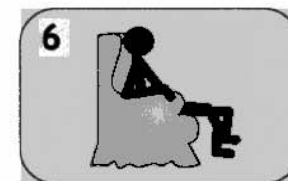
Place your hands on the surface.



Place one foot flat on the floor.



Lean forward and push up onto the forward leg and into standing position.




Sit. Rest. Then tell someone you have fallen.

Trauma Prevention Council, Central West Ontario Senior Falls Prevention Project. Used with permission.

Church Street Site,
200 Church St.,
Weston, ON M9N 1N8
Tel: (416) 249-8111

Keele Street Site,
2175 Keele St.,
Toronto, ON M6M 3Z4
Tel: (416) 249-8111

Finch Avenue Site,
2111 Finch Ave. W.,
Downsview, ON M3N 1N1
Tel: (416) 744-2500

 TTY: (416) 243-4638

