



FALL PREVENTION TOOLKIT

FALLS ARE NOT A NORMAL PART OF AGING.
Talk to your health care provider if you have had a fall.



Everyone is at risk for falls, but as we grow older the risk of injury due to falls increases. The good news is we can all take steps to prevent a fall. This Toolkit will help you take action to prevent falls and stay independent.

For more information on topics not covered in this Toolkit, visit www.findingbalancenb.ca or ask your primary care provider for additional resources.

For information on government programs and services available to older adults in New Brunswick, visit socialsupportsnb.ca, call Social Development at 1-833-733-7835 or call 2-1-1.

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ANYONE CAN FALL

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Understanding Your Risk

Anyone can fall, but the likelihood of falling increases as we age. Older adults fall more often because the conditions that contribute toward each person's risk of falling (also known as their fall risk factors), tend to increase with age. Falls among older adults can lead to negative health outcomes if they are not addressed right way, with the right people. Health care professionals can look at why a fall may have occurred. They can also help prevent future falls.

Did You Know?

About one in every three adults aged 65 years or more living at home will fall at least once a year. Falls are the leading cause of injury and hospitalizations in older Canadian adults. After a fall, people often become afraid of falling again. As a result, they may avoid events or activities. This can lead to loneliness, sadness, confusion, or anger. It can also result in a loss of independence.

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Assessing Your Risk of Falling

Older adults should assess their risk of falling once a year. To assess your risk of falling:

1. Complete the Staying Independent Checklist. A paper copy is included with this package. Ask family and friends for their input.
2. Book an appointment with your primary care provider (family physician or nurse practitioner). Take a copy of your completed checklist with you to share with them.

Fall Risk Factors

A fall risk factor is something that increases a person's chance of falling.

- Falls can happen because of even one risk factor. However, the more factors, the greater the risk of falling.
- Fall risk factors can be changed or eliminated. That is one reason we recommend that older adults report a fall right away, to the right people.
- Some of the fall risk factors that may be changed include:
- Challenges moving, including feeling weak or unsteady when moving
- Poor eyesight/vision
- Need for more support from others
- Poor nutrition
- Lack of sleep
- Health conditions including feeling dizzy or sleepy
- Home design including tripping hazards
- Fear of falling

Consulting Your Primary Care Provider

- Bring your completed Staying Independent Checklist.
- Tell them about any falls or near-falls you may have had over the past year.

If you do not currently have a primary care provider:

1. Register with Patient Connect NB. They assign providers on a first-come, first-served basis.
2. For more information or for help, call Tele-Care at 811.

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Staying Independent Checklist

Falls are a main reason many older adults lose their autonomy. To help determine your risk of falling, you should consult your primary care provider at least once a year.

Before your next appointment, you are also encouraged to answer the statements on the reverse side of this page to evaluate your own risk of falling. Remember to bring this self-screening checklist with you since it may be used by your primary care provider (family physician or nurse practitioner) to help guide the discussion about your personal fall risk factors. You may be asked about:

- Previous falls in the past year
- If you are worried about falling
- Any problems with your feet and footwear
- If you feel unsteady when standing or walking
- Any difficulties with your vision and hearing
- Medications that you are taking

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Check Your Risk for Falling

This checklist was developed by the Greater Los Angeles VA Geriatric Research Education Clinical Center and affiliates and is a validated fall risk self-assessment tool (Rubenstein et al. J Safety Res; 2011; 42(6):493-499). Adapted with permission of the authors.

Circle “Yes” or “No” for each statement below		Why it matters
Yes (2)	No (0)	I have fallen in the past 6 months.
Yes (2)	No (0)	I use or have been advised to use a cane or walker to get around safely.
Yes (1)	No (0)	Sometimes I feel unsteady when I am walking.
Yes (1)	No (0)	I steady myself by holding onto furniture when walking at home.
Yes (1)	No (0)	I am worried about falling.
Yes (1)	No (0)	I need to push with my hands to stand up from a chair.
Yes (1)	No (0)	I have some trouble stepping up onto a curb.
Yes (1)	No (0)	I often have to rush to the toilet.
Yes (1)	No (0)	I have lost some feeling in my feet.
Yes (1)	No (0)	I take medicine that sometimes makes me feel light-headed or more tired than usual.
Yes (1)	No (0)	I take medicine to help me sleep or improve my mood.
Yes (1)	No (0)	I often feel sad or depressed.
Yes (2)	No (0)	People who have fallen once are likely to fall again.
Yes (2)	No (0)	People who have been advised to use a cane or walker may already be more likely to fall.
Yes (1)	No (0)	Unsteadiness or needing support while walking are signs of poor balance.
Yes (1)	No (0)	This is also a sign of poor balance.
Yes (1)	No (0)	People who are worried about falling are more likely to fall.
Yes (1)	No (0)	Strengthening your leg muscles can reduce your risk of falling and being injured.
Yes (1)	No (0)	This is also a sign of weak leg muscles.
Yes (1)	No (0)	Rushing to the bathroom, especially at night, increases your chance of falling.
Yes (1)	No (0)	Numbness in your feet can cause stumbles and lead to falls.
Yes (1)	No (0)	Side effects from medicines can sometimes increase your chance of falling.
Yes (1)	No (0)	These medicines can sometimes increase your chance of falling.
Yes (1)	No (0)	Symptoms of depression, such as not feeling well or feeling slowed down, are linked to falls.

Total _____

Answer the statements above then add up the number of points for each “yes” answer. If you scored 4 points or more, you may be at risk for falling. Remember to bring this checklist to your primary healthcare provider to discuss your risk factors.



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Footwear and Foot Care

Taking care of your feet will help you live an active and independent life. When people have healthy feet, it is easier to walk, stand, and enjoy other activities that require balance and coordination.

Taking Care of Your Feet

- Check your feet often. Look for corns, blisters, open sores, redness, dry skin, swelling and ingrown toenails. Use a mirror, if needed.
- To prevent ingrown toenails, trim your toenails straight across. Not too short!
- Wash your feet in warm but not hot water. Dry feet completely, especially between your toes.
- To maintain good circulation, do regular exercises such as toe raises and ankle circles.

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Taking Care of Your Feet (continued)

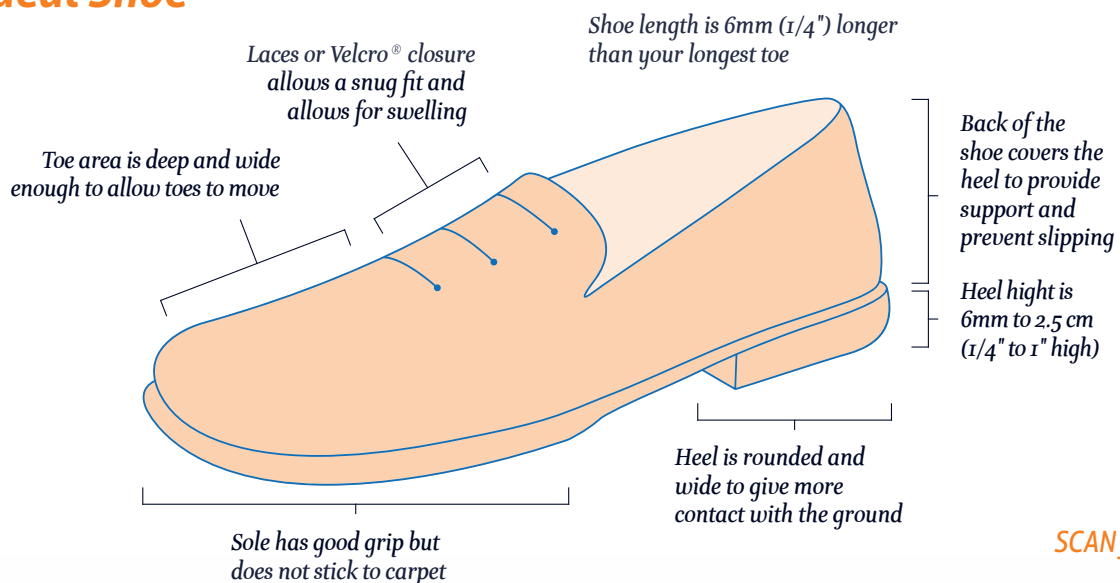
- Talk to your primary care provider or podiatrist if you have:
 - o pain or swelling in your feet
 - o tingling or pins and needles in your feet
 - o any changes to the shape of your feet or toes

Helpful Footwear Tips

Footwear that doesn't fit properly, with poor support or with worn soles can increase your risk for a fall.

- Try to wear supportive footwear with a non-slip tread both inside and outside your home. Avoid walking in bare feet, socks, or floppy slippers with an open heel.
- If your feet swell, choose well-fitting shoes with laces or a Velcro closure. This will allow for more room if needed.
- When buying footwear, consider the following tips:
 - o Wear your usual socks or stockings and orthotics.
 - o Always try both shoes on. Walk around in them to ensure they are comfortable. The heels should not slip if the shoes fit properly.

The Ideal Shoe



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Medication Safety

Medications tend to have a stronger effect on people as they age. For older adults, the more medication taken, the higher the risk of a fall. That's why all older adults should schedule yearly medication reviews. Medication reviews are especially important for older adults taking multiple medications, over-the-counter products, natural products, or vitamins.

What is a Medication Review?

A medication review is when a qualified health care professional reviews each prescription, medication, product or vitamin you're taking to ensure that each is being used appropriately, and that its benefits outweigh the harm. You can schedule a medication review with your pharmacist, physician or nurse practitioner. They will review your medications to make sure they are helping you live well.

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To get the most out of your medication review:

- Put all the medications, vitamins, dietary supplements, ointments and creams you use in a bag. Give it to the person conducting the review.
- Tell them about any changes to your health and any medication side effects.
- To remember what is said, bring someone with you or take notes.
- Alcohol can affect how medications work. Ask how it might affect you.

Medication Tips

- Make sure you understand all medications before taking them. This includes knowing why you need the medication, the recommended dosage and schedule, and the possible side effects.
- If any of your medication makes you feel sleepy or dizzy, talk to your health care provider or pharmacist as soon as possible. They may need to adjust your dose, schedule, or make other changes to help you stay well.
- Use the same pharmacy every time you fill any prescription.
- Keep a list of your current medications in your wallet and at home.
- Do not share your medications with others. Do not take another person's medications.
- Store all medications safely. Follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Check the expiry date before using any medication
- Ask Your Pharmacist or Primary Care Provider if you are having trouble:
 - o Swallowing your medication
 - o Opening your medication
 - o Handling your medication
 - o Reading medication labels
 - o Remembering to take your medication
 - o Following the recommended dosage or schedule

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Staying Physically Active

Regular physical activity helps people of all ages and abilities stay healthy. It helps people stay strong, maintain their mobility, balance, and flexibility. It also prevents diseases and conditions that can increase the risk of a fall.

Other benefits of physical activity

- Increases energy, confidence, and ability to participate in events with family and friends.
- Reduces the risk of falls. By preventing their risk of falls and related injuries, older adults can better maintain independent lifestyles.
- Can improve personal mood and mental health.
- Provides social benefits. Group exercise classes are a terrific way to meet new people

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Before Getting Active

- Your body needs energy. Eat well, with a balanced diet.
- Drink lots of water. Your body needs to be well hydrated, especially when you are exercising.
- Wear appropriate clothes and shoes for your planned activity.
- For outdoor activity, pay attention to the weather. Dress appropriately and think about your safety.
- If you are unsure if exercise is safe for you, talk with your health care provider or a certified exercise specialist. This is especially important for older adults who are at a higher risk for falls.

Helpful Tips

- Ease into it. Start with a gentle 10-minute session. Gradually increase length and intensity over time.
- Throughout the year, try to find a wide range of physical activities in different environments and settings.
- Make it a habit. Exercise a few hours each week, all year long. It will help you build and maintain your strength and your balance.
- Consider an exercise-based fall prevention program. These programs help participants stay active and reduce their risk of falling by improving their balance and coordination. Programs are available for people to complete alone in their homes. In many communities, these programs are also offered in a group setting.
- Remember: every little bit helps. Any amount of physical activity will help you live well.

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Moving Safely at Home

If you are having challenges moving safely within your home, these resources may help you live well.

Family and friends

If you are having challenges, tell the people who are close to you. They may have suggestions or ideas. They can also help you explore other resources for help.

Occupational Therapists and Physiotherapists

People in these professions help people find ways to keep moving safely. They may work with the Extra-Mural Program, at hospitals and public health clinics, or in private practices.

How to contact them:

- Call the Extra-Mural Program at 1-888- 862-2111 (toll free) or contact them through their website: extramuralnb.ca. You do not need a referral.
- Call the nearest hospital or health centre. to ask if an occupational therapist or physiotherapist might be available to help you. Go to the websites Horizonnb.ca or Vitalitenb.ca for hospital and clinic contact information.
- If you have private insurance and your plan covers these services, ask your doctor or nurse practitioner for a referral.

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Primary Health Providers

Your doctor or nurse practitioner can help you figure out what may be causing your challenges. They can also help you find services, specialists, and other solutions for your needs.

Ability New Brunswick

If you have a mobility disability, Ability New Brunswick can help. They can connect persons with disabilities with specialists, financial help, and other helpful services. To reach them, call 1-866-462-9555 (toll free) or access their website at www.abilitynb.ca.

Equipment

Mobility equipment or assistive devices may be helpful for you. To learn more, look for the mobility equipment section in the Aging in New Brunswick Guide. The free guide is available by calling 211 or for downloading online at www.stu.ca/aging-in-nb-en

New Brunswickers aged 65 or more can schedule a free Seniors Health, Wellbeing and Home Safety Review. When visiting your home, the reviewer may recommend equipment or devices to help you. For more information, call 211 or go online: <https://socialsupportsnb.ca/en/program/home-firs>

As equipment and assistive devices can be costly, check out these financial tips:

- Need equipment? Ask your doctor or nurse practitioner to write a prescription so you can recover some of the costs through your taxes.
- Have a private insurance plan? Check to see if the equipment you need is covered.
- Member of the Canada Armed Forces or the RCMP? Current and former members and their families may be eligible for Veteran's Disability Benefits. For more information call 1-866-522-2122 (toll free).
- Before buying any equipment, talk with an Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist. Sometimes people can benefit from second-hand equipment, like a used wheelchair or walker.
- Be careful not to buy new or used equipment that does not fit your body or needs.

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What to do if someone falls?

While everyone should take steps to prevent falls and related injuries, it is also important to know what to do if someone falls. Whether a fall happens to you or someone else, falls can impact the ability for older adults to live well.

Before Trying to Get Up

- Catch your breath. Take your time. Remain calm.
- Complete a head-to-toe scan of your body. Do you see any injuries? Feel any discomfort?
 - o If you are injured, feel discomfort, or are unable to get up:
 - o Call out for help. Make any noise to attract attention.
 - o Use an emergency call device or a telephone to ask for help.
 - o Wait for assistance to arrive. Place yourself in the most comfortable position you can. Try to remain warm and calm.
- If you are not injured, refer to the section “How to Get Up from a Fall”

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How to Get Up from a Fall

In the event you are by yourself and you **ARE NOT** injured, follow these steps to safely get up:



Roll onto your side.



Crawl over to a chair or sturdy piece of furniture.



From a kneeling position, put your arms up onto the seat of the chair.



Bring one knee forward. Place that foot on the floor.



Push up with your arms and legs. Pivot your bottom around.



Sit down. Rest before trying to move.

Take as much time as you need in between steps.

After Getting Up

- Whether you have fallen yourself or you have seen someone else fall, never underestimate the seriousness of a fall and the potential harm it may have caused.
- Older adults should see a health care professional as quickly as possible if they have fallen. Health care professionals can assess the situation. They will also determine if fall may have resulted from an illness, medication issue, or another factor.
- Fall-related injuries are not always immediately noticeable. Take your time to monitor the situation. Some issues may only appear after a few hours or days.
- Ask family, friends, caregivers, health care provider and other health care professionals to help develop a personal plan to help prevent another fall.

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FALL PREVENTION Personal Action Plan

Now that you have reviewed the fall prevention resources, use this Action Plan to identify changes that need to be made to reduce your risk of falling. It is important to determine which tasks you can complete yourself, which ones require help from other people to complete, and which ones require professional assistance. If you are not sure, you are encouraged to consult a health care provider before getting started.

Work to be done / help needed

Hazards at home		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
Footwear		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
Medication		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>

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Physical Activity	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assistive Devices and Equipment	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Safety Concerns	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
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