Senior Tips for Standing Tall and Preventing Falls

According to the National Council on Aging, falls are the greatest cause of injury among the senior population. Even when serious injuries such as muscle sprains or bone fractures don’t occur, the fear of falling again can do just as much damage. Because it could happen anytime, anywhere, regardless of age or health, it’s important for seniors to understand what may increase their risk and what steps they can take to prevent a fall from happening.

Health and senior living experts offer several suggestions to decrease the chance of suffering a fall-related injury:

1. **See the Doctor** – Talk to your doctor about your risk of falling. Certain health conditions, such as diabetes or arthritis, or medications taken for these conditions may cause dizziness or mobility limitations. Some drug combinations and side effects can also interfere with balance. Depending on your mobility, your doctor might suggest seeing a physical or occupational therapist to help with your gait and range of motion.

   It’s also important to visit the eye doctor regularly, as vision changes commonly occur with age. Make sure to always wear your glasses if you need them and ensure your prescription is up-to-date.

2. **Stay Active** – The best thing anyone can do to avoid a fall is to stay physically active. Improving flexibility and strengthening leg and core muscles are great ways to improve balance, and in turn make it easier to keep yourself from falling when you stand up or trip.

3. **Remove Hazards at Home** – Loose rugs, carpet or floorboards can be dangerous for seniors who aren’t as agile as they used to be. Fix trouble areas and remove or secure throw rugs with non-slip backing. Try to keep clutter from building up on the floors, and rearrange the furniture so rooms are easy to navigate.

4. **Keep Areas Well Lit** – Especially if poor or low vision is a problem, make sure all areas of your home are well lit at night. Install nightlights in the hallways and bathrooms, and keep a lamp near your bedside.

5. **Consider Your Footwear** – Most falls occur when someone is wearing heels, loose slippers or socks. You can help to avoid a fall by selecting a sensible pair of shoes to wear around the house. Look for shoes with good traction and snugly fitting slippers with rubber soles.

6. **Learn About Assistive Devices** – If mobility is an issue, your doctor might suggest you use a cane or walker to get around. Make sure your device is adjusted to your height and consider other household modifications that could keep you steady. Think about installing grab bars and non-slip mats in the shower, extra handrails along stairs or non-slip treads on slippery surfaces, such as outdoor steps.

7. **Watch for Signs of Weakness** – Since many changes that come with age occur gradually, you may not even notice that you have trouble standing up or that you’ve started to instinctively hold on to the wall as you’re walking. Pay attention to any physical changes that could make you more vulnerable to falling (dizzy spells, muscles cramps, etc.) and address these issues with your doctor.
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