

# FALLS ARE THE LEADING CAUSE OF TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY (TBI) IN THE US.

Have you fallen or almost fallen in the past year? Do you feel dizzy or unsteady when you stand up, bend down, climb stairs, or use the bathroom? Do you have poor sensation, swelling, or numbness in your legs, ankles, or feet? If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, you may be at greater risk for falling. Whether you have a brain injury or at risk for one, everyone can benefit from falls prevention tips.



## Find exercise programs

- Build up balance, strength, and flexibility to prevent and get up safely after a non-injurious fall.
- Do exercises or join a program to strengthen legs and improve balance (tai-chi, yoga, resistance bands, or using free-weights).

## Talk to your doctor

- Ask for a falls risk screening. Risk factors include advanced age, previous falls, muscle weakness, gait & balance problems, poor vision, & chronic conditions.
- Take note of changes in symptoms, new medications, or if a fall occurs.
- Visits may be fast-paced, so write down any questions beforehand or bring a trusted person if memory is a difficulty.
- Ask about specialists that can help with assistive devices, movement, and modifications.

## Get vision & hearing checks

- Update eyeglasses as needed with any change in vision to help avoid obstacles or potentially harmful objects.
- Get annual checks with your appropriate doctor and wear any hearing aids as prescribed.

## Keep your home safe

- Remove objects in each room that you could fall over (including clutter or loose rugs).
- Re-arrange items used more often so that they can be reached without climbing, bending or losing your balance.
- Wear proper footwear inside and outside the house (fits properly, with ground contact and non-slip grip).
- Increase lighting inside & outside with easy access (motion, voice, or touch activated).
- Add grab bars in your bathroom (in and outside the shower/bath and by the toilet).
- Add hand rails to both sides of the steps (inside and outside).

## Review medications & devices

- Side effects or interactions from medicines (changes in vision, weakness, dizziness, drowsiness, etc.) may increase your falling risk.
- Take medications as prescribed (for example, with food or at a certain time).
- Ask your doctor about any vitamins or supplements that may be beneficial.
- Ask about and use mobility devices (walkers, wheelchairs, etc.) as prescribed. Make sure they are working properly and avoid leaving them in places that may cause tripping.



more than just a fall:

# CONCUSSION

- A type of TBI that results from a bump, blow, or jolt to the head that causes the brain to move rapidly back and forth within the skull. Some people lose consciousness or black out while others do not.
- Damage can create functional changes in the brain, interrupting processing & communication.
- Majority of people recover from a concussion, but proper diagnosis, rest, & treatment is beneficial to prevent additional concussions.
- If you are not sure about a symptom, or if symptoms worsen, you should contact a healthcare professional.

## SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

### physical

- head pain or pressure
- nausea or vomiting
- balance problems
- dizziness
- fatigue or tiredness
- blurry or double vision
- sensitivity
- numbness or tingling

### thoughts

- difficulty thinking & problem-solving
- difficulty concentrating or remembering
- feeling slowed down
- feeling sluggish, foggy, or groggy

### feelings

- irritable
- impulsive
- more emotional or fluctuating moods
- feeling unmotivated or lack of emotion
- nervousness or anxiety

### sleep

- drowsiness
- sleeps less or more than usual
- trouble falling or staying asleep
- restless or not feeling refreshed after sleep



### warning signs after concussion

- appears dazed, stunned, or confused about events
- can't recall events before or after the bump or fall
- slow answers to questions or talking
- loses consciousness (even briefly)
- repeats questions
- shows behavior/ personality changes
- one pupil (center of the eye) is larger than the other
- seizures or blank stares

If you are not sure about a symptom, or if symptoms worsen, you should contact a healthcare professional.

## REFERENCES & RESOURCES

- **Fall Prevention of Excellence:**  
<http://stopfalls.org/>
- **National Council on Aging:**  
<https://www.ncoa.org/>
- **Center for Disease Control (CDC):**  
<https://www.cdc.gov/>
- **NC Falls Prevention Coalition:**  
<http://ncfallsprevention.org/>
- **NC Aging & Adult Services:**  
<https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/daas>
- **Winnipeg Regional Health Authority:**  
<https://preventfalls.ca/>