



FALLS PLAN OF CARE

Now what: Steps to take after a fall.



HEALTHY AGING NC



Stopping Elderly
Accidents, Deaths & Injuries

Now What?

You may have suffered a fall or are fearful of falling, and this fear is impeding on your life. This is a guide put together by our communities to provide resources for you regarding fall prevention. Please read through this guide at your own pace and take the advice and resources to prevent falls in your life.

The first thing to discuss is how to prevent a fall, here are 6 simple steps to preventing a fall.

1. Find a good balance and exercise program

Look to build balance, strength, and flexibility. Once you find one you like, bring a friend! This could help you stick with the program and make it a little more fun.

2. Talk to your health care provider

Ask for an assessment of your risk of falling. If you have already fallen, ask your doctor for some recommendations of programs in your area.

3. Review your medications with your doctor or pharmacist.

Some medications have side effects that can affect your balance. Review these medications with your doctor or pharmacist regularly to assess this.

4. Get your vision and hearing checked annually and update your eyeglasses

Your eyes and ears are key to keeping you on your feet.

5. Keep your home safe

Remove tripping hazards, increase lighting, make the stairs safe, and install grab bars in key areas.

6. Talk to your family members

Enlist their support in taking simple steps to stay safe. Falls are not just a seniors issue.

(NCOA: 6 Steps to Prevent a Fall; ncoa.org/FallsPrevention)

We hope that this guide will be useful to you in terms of what to do next. Please know that you are not alone, and there are resources in the High Country for you.

Fear of Falling

Fear can be a helpful signal; it can bring your attention to problems- such as a balance disorder, reduce vision or muscle weakness that keep you from moving confidently. However, fear can also undermine you. Persistent worrying about a fall may cause you to limit your range of motion unnecessarily and avoid activities that you're capable of. It is estimated that one-third to one-half of older adults are concerned enough about potential falls that they have begun to restrict or avoid activities that would be beneficial for their health.

Why does fear limit us?

When we are fearful, we often avoid activities. Avoiding activities can reduce our social interaction, muscle strength, flexibility, and happiness. This results in social isolation and an increased fall risk.

How can you overcome fear?

Gaining confidence is one of the best ways to reduce fear of any kind. Improving your strength and balance can increase your confidence immensely. There are specific programs in the High Country that focus on this fear and work on your balance, flexibility, and peace of mind.

How to Make Your Home Safer to Prevent Falls

Why is this important?

- ✚ A full 80 percent of falls happen in the bathroom (*NewsUSA, quoting a National Institute on Aging statistic*)
- ✚ In the elderly living in the community, 30%-50% of falls are due to environmental causes (eg, poor lighting, slippery floors, and uneven surfaces) (*NCOA*)
- ✚ According to Medical Alert Advice, one in three adults has trouble getting into and out of the bathtub (*NCOA*)

It is so important to keep your home as safe as possible to prevent falls. There are easy ways to modify your home to make it safer. Please go through this home safety assessment and notice the changes you may need to make. If some changes are more extensive (replacing tubs, fixing stairs, moving washer/dryer upstairs, etc.), here are some contacts that may be able to help.

Independent Living Program
245 Winklers Creek Rd #A
(828) 265-5419

NCBAM(North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry
1-877-506-2226



HOUSEHOLD SAFETY CHECKLIST

OUTDOOR

- Make sure address is visible for emergency services.
- Is there adequate lighting at night?
- Are the steps too steep, cracked or uneven?
- Are driveways or walkways snow and/or ice covered?
- Do the steps have proper handrails?
- Can your loved one hear the door bell?

Suggestions

1. Add large number stickers on to mailbox and check that you can see address from the road.
2. Add an outdoor light if one is not available, motion-activated lights may provide more comfort and security.
3. If the steps are too steep, consider an alternate route for your loved one. If the steps are cracked or broken, call the county government about repairing them.
4. Make sure you have someone around to shovel the snow and ice in the driveway. Always keep a bag of salt to avoid icy driveways.
5. A device that enables a ringing doorbell to trigger a flashing light can help your loved one know that someone is at the door.

LIVING ROOM

- Is there too much clutter and not enough space to move around furniture?
- Is furniture unstable?
- Can your loved one reach the light switch to turn it off or on?
- Do throw rugs and electrical cords pose a hazard?
- Is the floor uneven or is carpet torn?
- Is the chair relatively easy for the senior to get in and out of?

Suggestions

1. Organization is the key to preventing too much clutter. It may be time to downsize and eliminate bigger pieces of furniture. You could also add shelving.
2. If the arms or legs of furniture are wobbly-try gluing them. If the chair is too low add a cushion or pillow on seat to raise it.
3. If your loved one cannot reach the light add a "clapper" light
4. Remove throw rugs.
5. Install lock in switches on thermostats to control the temperature and prevent forest fires.

BEDROOM

- Is the room cluttered?

- Does your loved one has access to the telephone at night?
- Is there enough light?
- Is the bed high or low?
- Do tangled electrical cords obstruct pathways?
- Does the furniture provide proper support, if needed?

Suggestions

1. Go through items and throw away what is no longer needed/wanted to get rid of clutter.
2. Keep a cordless phone or cellphone beside the bed for convenience.
3. Nightlights are good options for dark rooms at night. Make sure the wattage is high enough to provide visibility. Rope lighting is also a good option for hallways and doorways.
4. The bed is too low if your loved one's knees are above the hips when sitting on the bed. You can add risers. If the bed is too high when legs do not touch the floor. You can remove the bed frame or use a lower profile mattress or bed springs
5. Use extension cords to run electrical cords behind furniture
6. Make sure chairs are the proper height

LAUNDRY ROOM/ STAIRWAYS

- Is there adequate lighting on the stairway?

- Are there sturdy handrails for the stairway?

- Does the last step blend in with the floor?
- Are the pathways cluttered?
- Has detergent spilled on the floor?

- Are the steps too steep or slippery?

Suggestions

1. Increase wattage to allowable limits and add overhead and wall lighting, if necessary.
2. Add at least 1 railing the entire length of the wall. Ideally, there should be railing on both sides.
3. Add adhesive stair treads or a carpet runner.
4. Paint the bottom steps a different color from the floor.
5. Immediately clean up spills and wear shoes/socks with non-skid soles on them.
6. If possible, move the laundry to the main living area-if not, lock the door if your loved one wanders or is at risk for falls.

THINGS YOU CAN DO TO PREVENT FALLS

- Attend a fall prevention class such as A Matter of Balance or Tai Chi for Arthritis & Fall Prevention

- Have your loved one's doctor or pharmacist look at all the medications they take. Some can make your loved one sleepy or dizzy.

- Have your vision checked at least once a year. Poor vision can increase risk of falling.
- Have your hearing checked at least once a year. Poor hearing can increase risk of falling

- Wear shoes both inside and outside house. Avoid going barefoot.

- Paint a contrasting color on the top edge of all the steps so that your loved one can see them better
- Exercise Regularly!!!

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you need further assistance with home safety and fall prevention, please contact:

**High Country Area Agency on Aging
Amber Chapman
Family Caregiver Support Specialist
828.265.5434 x 113
achapman@hccog.org**



**HIGH COUNTRY
AREA AGENCY**
on
AGING

Exercising

THE FACTS

- ✚ The loss of strength and stamina attributed to aging is in part caused by reduced physical activity.
- ✚ Inactivity increases with age. By age 75, about one in three men and one in two women engage in no physical activity.
- ✚ Among adults aged 65 years and older, walking and gardening or yard work are, by far, the most popular physical activities.
- ✚ Social support from family and friends has been consistently and positively related to regular physical activity.

THE BENEFITS



- Physical activity helps maintain the ability to live independently and reduces the risk of falling and fracturing bones.
- Reduces the risk of dying from coronary heart disease and of developing high blood pressure, colon cancer, and diabetes.
- It can help reduce blood pressure in some people with hypertension.
- Helps people with chronic, disabling conditions improve their stamina and muscle strength.
- Reduces symptoms of anxiety and depression and fosters improvements in mood and feelings of well-being.
- Helps maintain healthy bones, muscles, and joints.
- Helps control joint swelling and pain associated with arthritis.

The first step:

Knowing the basics of how to get started, where to exercise, what equipment you need and how to set goals can prepare your mind and body for what's to come. Take the time to make sure you have everything you need, from equipment to knowledge, so you start out on the right foot. Here is a list of what you can do to get started on your journey to being healthier.

1. **Get Medical Clearance:** It is always good to consult your doctor before starting an exercise program. This will give you a chance to talk about your concerns and also get advice about the most appropriate exercise programs for you and your body.
2. **Always warm up and cool down:** Warming up helps prepare your body for activity, making injury a lower risk. Cooling down after a workout allows for a gradual recovery of preexercise heart rate and blood pressure.
3. **Drink plenty of water before, during, and after exercise:** Drinking water keeps you hydrated, lubricates joints to regulate body temperature, and pumps blood to the muscles.
4. **Concentrate on exercises that improve and maintain your range of motion, lubricate the joints and keep muscles flexible.** Everyday activities will be easier to carry out and you will have less pain too.

EVIDENCE BASED EXERCISE PROGRAMS

 A MATTER OF BALANCE	 TAI CHI FOR ARTHRITIS AND FALL PREVENTION
<p>Who should attend?</p> <p>The program is for older adults who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are worried about falls • Have fallen in the past • Limit activities because of a fear of falling • Are interested in improving balance, strength, and flexibility • Live on their own • Can problem solve <p>What do you learn?</p> <p>You learn to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • View falls as controllable • Set goals for increasing activity • Make changes to reduce your risk of falling at home • Exercise to increase strength and balance 	<p>Who should attend?</p> <p>The program is for older adults who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Want to maintain and improve balance, strength and flexibility • Want to reduce stress and improve awareness • Live on their own • Are interested in meeting new people • Want to maintain progress made in physical therapy <p>What do you learn?</p> <p>You learn to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve balance, strength, flexibility • Move with ease and awareness • Improve relaxation • Decrease pain • Prevent falls

For information about classes in your area, please contact:

Amber Chapman
828-265-5434 x 113
achapman@regiond.org



Where to exercise?

Most senior centers have exercise programs that you can join. Also, with the silver sneakers program through an individual's insurance, you can attend a gym for free.

Check to see if you are eligible at www.silversneakers.com.

Healthy Aging NC partners with our providers to help support evidence based programs in Western North Carolina- you can find nearby classes on their website www.healthyagingnc.com.

Below are the providers that offer exercise classes for older adults in our regions contact information, feel free to contact them to see which classes are available in your area.

Alleghany County

Alleghany Council on Aging

85 E Whitehead St.,
Sparta, NC 28675
(336) 372-4640

Alleghany County Library

115 Atwood St.,
Sparta, NC 28675
(336)372-5573

Alleghany Wellness Center

508 Collins Road
Sparta, NC 28675
(336) 372-2944

Ashe County

Ashe Services for Aging

180 Chatty Rob Lane
West Jefferson, NC 28694
(336) 246-4347

Avery County

Avery County Senior Center

165 Schultz Circle
Newland, NC 28657
(828) 733-8220

Avery YMCA

436 Hospital Dr
Linville, NC 28646
(828) 737-5500

Mitchell County

Mitchell County Senior Center

425 Ledger School Rd
Bakersville, NC 28705
(828) 688-3019

Wilkes County

Wilkes Senior Resources

228 Fairplains School Rd.
North Wilkesboro, NC 28659
(336) 667-5281

Wilkes Family YMCA

1081 YMCA Blvd
Wilkesboro, NC 28697
(336) 838-3991

Watauga County

Lois E Harrill Senior Center

132 Poplar Grove Connector #A
Boone, NC 28607
(828) 265-8090

Western Watauga Senior Center

1081 Old US Hwy 421
Sugar Grove, NC 28679
(828) 297-5195

Broyhill Wellness Center

232 Boone Heights Dr
Boone, NC 28607
(828) 266-1060

Yancey County

Yancey County Senior Center

503 Medical Campus Dr.
Burnsville, NC 28714
(828) 682-6011

Personal Emergency Response System

What is a personal emergency response system?

Personal Emergency Response Systems (PERS), also known as **Medical Alert System**, let you call for help in an emergency by pushing a button. A PERS has three components: a small radio transmitter, a console connected to your telephone, and an **emergency response** center that monitors call. (*Federal Trade Commission: Personal Emergency Response Systems; consumer.ftc.gov*)

When is it appropriate to get a PERS?

- If you live by yourself
- Have fallen in the past
- Have a fear of falling

You can contact your phone company to find out if they have a medical alert system.

If you are worried about the price of the Personal Response, contact your local project on aging-they may have some resources then to help pay for the cost of the services. If you are a veteran, contact your local VA to find out if they have benefits to help with cost.

If you are interested in receiving more information about the Medical Alert Systems- please contact:

**Amber Chapman
Family Caregiver and Health Promotion Specialist
High Country Area Agency on Aging
Phone: 828-265-5434 ext. 113
Email: achapman@hccog.org**