

## Home safety assessment

- Are there throw rugs that pose a tripping hazard throughout your home?
- Are there loose objects lying on the floor?
- Do you have to walk around cords/wires in your home?
- Are steps uneven/broken?
- Do you have lights over your stairway, and a switch at both the top and bottom of the stairs?
- Are handrails loose or broken?  
Are they on both sides of the stairs?
- Is there a light within arm's reach of your bed?
- Is the path from your bedroom to the bathroom lit? If not, try using a nightlight.
- Are the lights in your house bright? If not, it may be a good idea to install brighter, fluorescent light bulbs.



Assessing all of the above areas and making the appropriate changes can help you to improve safety and reduce fall risks in your home!

## Take action!

Evidence-based programs such as Stepping On, A Matter of Balance and Tai Ji Quan: Moving for Better Balance offer simple ways to prevent and significantly decrease the risk of falling. For more information or to register for upcoming workshops, visit [yourjuniper.org](http://yourjuniper.org) or call the Central Minnesota Council on Aging at 320-253-9349.

### Schedule a free home safety assessment

For tips on how to make improvements to reduce the risk of falling, call 320-255-7295. Sponsored by the Central Minnesota Falls Prevention and Home Safety Coalition.

## Signs and symptoms of head injury

If you fall, see your health care provider immediately. If you or your loved one is on blood thinners (such as Warfarin), you should see a health care provider for any bump or blow to the head — even if symptoms are not present.

### Symptoms of a mild head injury include:

- persistent mild headache
- difficulty with concentration, memory, and decision making
- feeling tired and lacking energy or motivation
- disruption of sleep
- sensitivity to light and sound
- ringing in ears
- mood changes

### Symptoms of a moderate or severe head injury include:

- persistent or worsening headache
- nausea or vomiting
- convulsions or seizures
- dilation of one or both pupils
- slurred speech
- weakness or numbness in arms/legs
- loss of coordination
- increased confusion, restlessness, or agitation

For more information, visit [www.cdc.gov/traumaticbraininjury/](http://www.cdc.gov/traumaticbraininjury/)

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## FALLS PREVENTION



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## Falls in youth and general population

Unintentional falls are the number one cause of non-fatal injury in children. Most of these falls happen right at home.

### To keep your child safe from falls in the home:

- install window guards and stops — do not depend on screens to keep children from falling from windows.
- properly secure babies and young children when they are seated in chairs, swings or strollers.
- do not place an occupied carrier on an elevated surface.

Another common place where children fall is at the playground.

### To prevent falls and injuries at the park:

- go to playgrounds with soft surfaces, such as shock absorbing rubber or sand.
- play with and actively *supervise* your children.
- encourage friendly play, with no pushing or shoving on elevated surfaces.



Falls affect members of the general population too!

### To help prevent falls:

- limit alcohol use.
- use caution when climbing a ladder or standing on an elevated surface.
- keep items on lower shelves and use step stools, if necessary, to eliminate the risk of falling off of counters or chairs when reaching for objects.

## Falls in older adults

Falls affect 1 in 3 adults over the age of 65 each year, and are the leading cause of fatal and nonfatal injuries in older adults.

### Risk factors for falls are:

- 85 years of age or older
- chronic steroid use, previous bone fracture, osteoporosis or bone cancer
- improper use of medication
- poor physical fitness
- poor vision

### Older adults can prevent falls by:

- exercising regularly.
- reviewing medications to identify potential side effects that may cause falls, such as lightheadedness or dizziness.
- getting annual vision checks and updating eyeglass prescriptions regularly.
- eliminating tripping and slipping hazards in the home. This includes:
  - removing objects from stairwells
  - eliminating throw rugs and other tripping hazards
  - wearing socks or slippers with a good grip
  - installing grab bars in the bathroom and non-slip mats in the tub or shower



## Winter weather falls

A unique hazard that we deal with in Minnesota is falls due to winter weather. With the cold temperatures come ice and snow, resulting in slick sidewalks, roads and walkways. Our hospitals see many fall injuries during the winter season every year.



### To help prevent winter falls:

- allow extra time; walking quickly on slick surfaces can lead to falls.
- stretch often, as cold weather can make muscles less elastic and capable of reacting during a fall.
- invest in shoes with good grip and traction.
- keep a container of salt and/or sand in your garage or near doors, and sprinkle on driveways and sidewalks to reduce snow and ice.
- ask family or neighbors for help to clear snow from driveways and sidewalks.

## Peace of mind

CentraCare Health Medical Alert Service provides easy-to-use, affordable Personal Emergency Response Systems that put a call for help right at a person's fingertip. We provide service across Central Minnesota and have several options available to meet your unique needs including:

- Automatic fall detection buttons
- Mobile "on-the-go" buttons
- Medication dispensers

Call Medical Alert Service at **320-255-5700** or **800-835-6652, ext. 55700** for more information or to start service today.

