

## FALL RISK PREVENTION ([www.caregiver.com](http://www.caregiver.com))

The number of people who fall every day is shocking. In 2002, falls caused about 12,800 deaths and sent 1.6 million seniors to hospital emergency rooms. Put another way, every hour one older American dies and 183 go to the hospital for fall-related injuries.

Here are some ways you can stay on your feet:

In the Home:

- Make your home safer; cut clutter and light your rooms well.
- Add things to lean on, such as grab bars and handrails in stairs, bathrooms, and on walkways leading to and from the home.
- Ask a neighbor or a friend to help screw in that hard-to-reach light bulb or walk your dog on a snowy day.
- Keep salt or sand handy for an icy walk.

In the Community:

- Watch for uneven pavement, tree roots, slippery walking surfaces, uneven steps, loose floor mats, unsafe stair design, and dark areas.
- Take the elevator, not the escalator.
- Look for doors and sidewalks with safety features such as handrails, grab bars, curb cuts, good lighting, and ramps.
- At the Doctor's Office or Pharmacy:
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist how your medicines might affect you. See which drugs you don't need or could take less of, or which you could take at a different time of day to reduce risk.

For more on how to prevent falls, check out the new National Action Plan to Reduce Falls in the Elderly, now available at NCOA's Center for Healthy Aging at [www.healthyagingprograms.org](http://www.healthyagingprograms.org).