

Learn How to Prevent Falls

La Crosse County Falls Prevention Resource Guide



Visit
www.lacrossestopfalls.org
for additional information

Stand Tall, Don't Fall

Falling Is A Big Deal

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Falling Is A Big Deal



Myth vs Reality

Myth: Moving means more opportunities to fall.

Reality: Use it or lose it! Being active can improve your overall strength, balance, and ability to maneuver a variety of environments.

If You Fall, You May Not Land Where You Want To

- 1 in 3 older adults over age 65 fall every year in the U.S.
- Falls are the 2nd leading cause of death in Wisconsin and the first cause of hospitalization of older people
- 14% of all ambulance calls in La Crosse County are related to falls
- 20-30% of people who fall suffer moderate to severe injury (hip fracture, head trauma)
- Every 29 minutes an older adult dies from a fall-related injury
- Even if you have no injury, fear of falling leads to restricting activity, which weakens your body and increases risk for another fall

Things You Can Do Now

Topics Included In This Booklet:

- Take the **Rate Your Risk** quiz
- Talk to your doctor about falls
- Exercise - strength & balance
- Attend a Stepping On class
- Wear sturdy shoes
- Take the **Older Adult Depression Quiz**
- Have your vision checked
- Make your living environment safe
- Manage your medications

Rate Your Risk Quiz

Check Your Risk for Falling

Please circle "Yes" or "No" for each statement below

Yes (2) No (0)

I have fallen in the last 6 months

Why it Matters

People who have fallen once are likely to fall again

Yes (2) No (0)

I use or have been advised to use a cane or walker to get around safely

Why it Matters

People who have been advised to use a cane or walker may already be more likely to fall

Yes (1) No (0)

Sometimes I feel unsteady when I am walking

Why it Matters

Unsteadiness or needing support while walking are signs of poor balance

Yes (1) No (0)

I steady myself by holding onto furniture when walking at home

Why it Matters

This is also a sign of poor balance

Yes (1) No (0)

I am worried about falling

Why it Matters

People who are worried about falling are more likely to fall

Yes (1) No (0)

I need to push with my hands to stand up from a chair

Why it Matters

This is a sign of weak leg muscles, a major reason for falling

Yes (1) No (0)

I have some trouble stepping up onto a curb

Why it Matters

This is also a sign of weak leg muscles

Yes (1) No (0)

I often have to rush to the toilet

Why it Matters

Rushing to the bathroom, especially at night, increases your chance of falling

Yes (1) No (0)

I have lost some feeling in my feet

Why it Matters

Numbness in your feet can cause stumbles and lead to falls

Yes (1) No (0)

I take medicine that sometimes makes me lightheaded or more tired than usual

Why it matters

Side effects from medicines can sometimes increase your chance of falling

Yes (1) No (0)

I take medicine to help me sleep or improve my mood

Why it Matters

These medicines can sometimes increase our chance of falling

Yes (1) No (0)

I often feel sad or depressed

Why it Matters

Symptoms of depression, such as not feeling well or feeling slowed down, are linked to falls

Total _____

Add up the number of points. If you scored 4 points or more, you may be at risk of falling. Discuss this quiz with your doctor.

Pills & Spills



Myth vs Reality

Myth: Taking medication doesn't increase my risk of falling.

Reality: People who take four or more medications or take them incorrectly are at greater risk of falling. Medications such as narcotics, antihistamines and medications for anxiety, sleep and depression can put you at risk for a fall.

Don't Let Pills Push You Down

- Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist about side effects and interactions of your medications
- Carry a current list of all prescription and over-the-counter medications with you and review the list at each doctor visit
- Talk with your doctor and pharmacist before you take any over-the-counter medications such as herbs, vitamins, minerals, etc.
- Get prescriptions filled at one pharmacy
- Store medicine in the original container so you have the correct information about the medicine
- Install a bright light and keep a magnifying glass in the area that you prepare your medications to prevent wrong or missed doses
- Develop a system to take your medicine and let others help if needed
- Avoid drinking alcohol while on any prescription or over-the-counter medication

Resources

Talk to your Pharmacist about what medications you are taking and if any modifications or changes can be made to reduce your risk of falling.

Talk to your Pharmacist about medication set up systems such as monthly **bubble packs** or **auto-fill programs** to help you take your medications as prescribed.

Medication drop-off boxes to dispose of prescription & over the counter PILL & PATCH medications will be accepted in their original containers at Gundersen Health System and the following local Police Departments: La Crosse, Onalaska, West Salem, Holmen, Campbell and Bangor. Please call for drop off days and times.

Brain Health

No Health Without Mental Health

Everyone Needs A Checkup From The Neck Up

- We take care of our physical health –we see a doctor if we have a physical injury, chest pain or breathing problem. It is just as important to take care of our brain and our mental health
- Depression and Dementia can cause changes in walking and balance, leading to a fall
- Research has shown those with any degree of Depression were up to 70% more likely to have multiple falls and injury than those who were not depressed
- Participate in activities that improve our memory; exercise, socialize, eat healthy foods, get enough sleep, do crossword puzzles, Sudoku, brain games, take a class

Older Adult Depression Quiz

Choose the best answer for how you have felt over the past week:

- | | |
|---|----------|
| 1. Are you basically satisfied with your life? | Yes / No |
| 2. Have you dropped many of your activities and interests? | Yes / No |
| 3. Do you feel that your life is empty? | Yes / No |
| 4. Do you often get bored? | Yes / No |
| 5. Are you in good spirits most of the time? | Yes / No |
| 6. Are you afraid that something bad is going to happen to you? | Yes / No |
| 7. Do you feel happy most of the time? | Yes / No |
| 8. Do you often feel helpless? | Yes / No |
| 9. Do you prefer to stay at home, rather than going out and doing new things? | Yes / No |
| 10. Do you feel you have more problems with memory than most? | Yes / No |
| 11. Do you think it is wonderful to be alive now? | Yes / No |
| 12. Do you feel pretty worthless the way you are now? | Yes / No |
| 13. Do you feel full of energy? | Yes / No |
| 14. Do you feel that your situation is hopeless? | Yes / No |
| 15. Do you think that most people are better off than you are? | Yes / No |

Count the number of 'yes' answers. Total _____ A score > 5 points is suggestive of Depression. Make an appointment to see your health care provider now and bring this with you.

Myth vs Reality

Myth: Depression is to be expected as I get older; I can just snap out of it if I think positively.

Reality: Depression is not a normal part of life for anyone. There are many reasons people can get depressed. Whether from a life event, sleep deprivation, digestive troubles which can decrease the ability to absorb B12, which can alter your mood, or a diet high in sugar can also alter moods. Discuss with your doctor the best route to take to relieve your depression.

Resources

Great Rivers 211 provides free, confidential community information, referrals, and crisis line services 24 hours per day.

La Crosse County Crisis Hotline: 608-784-4357

Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC): 608-785-5700

Strength & Balance

Myth vs Reality

If you are having difficulties moving about, you are at great risk for a fall. Limiting activity because you are afraid of falling will only make you weaker and at greater risk for a fall.

- Are you experiencing dizziness, lightheadedness, stiffness, pain, balance problems?
- Do you hang onto objects to help you get around?
- Is it hard to reach up or bend over?

What to do:

1. Call your doctor's office now and explain why you need to get in to see the doctor as soon as possible. Take the Rate Your Risk Quiz and bring it with you.
2. Talk with your doctor to see if you may need a referral for further services such as:
 - Physical Therapy/Occupational Therapy
 - Exercise Program
 - Suggestions for equipment to help you get around
 - Home evaluation for proper assistive equipment to increase safety and independence
 - Neurology consult or Pain Clinic
3. Talk with your doctor about need for a walking aid such as a cane or walker.
 - Ask about a walker with a built in seat.
 - These mobility aids may be available for no cost from the local Loan Closet contacts. Call 608-785-5700 for local Loan Closet contact phone numbers.
4. Make sure your cane/walker is the right type of device and size for you. Ask for help from a healthcare professional such as a nurse or physical therapist to make sure your cane/walker is fitted correctly to you.
5. Get involved in an exercise program that focuses on strength and balance.
6. It is beneficial to avoid long periods of sitting or lying down. Be sure to get up and move around at least every two hours.

Myth: What's the use, I am too old and weak to exercise.

Reality: It's never too late to get stronger. Strength and balance can be improved at any age or with any health condition.

Resources

Stepping On is a seven week program that includes strength and balance exercise, the role vision and medication plays in fall prevention, home safety, etc. For additional information go to www.lacrossestopfalls.org or contact the Aging and Disability Resource Center at 608-785-5700.

Strong Seniors is a strength-training program to improve muscle strength, balance, bone density, and self-confidence. Contact the La Crosse County Health Department at 608-785-9853.

Walk Strong - Walk Tall is a 4-7 week fall prevention program that consists of group discussion of risk factors for falling and balance/strengthening exercises. The program is coordinated through the Physical Therapy Program at UW-La Crosse. For more information contact jgreany@uwlax.edu

Learn more about Tai Chi, strength, balance, and other programs for older adults.

YMCA 608-785-9622

Black River Beach Neighborhood Center 608-789-8640

Myrick Park Center 608-789-8690

South Side Neighborhood Center 608-789-8298

Aging and Disability Resource Center 608-785-5700

Swing into Shape and **Gentle Yoga** - Learn gentle movement to improve range of motion, flexibility and strength. Programs available for purchase on DVD. For more information, or to order a program, contact Gundersen Health System at 608-775-4717.

Visit www.lacrossestopfalls.org for more strength and balance resources.

Nutrition



Myth vs Reality

Myth: Nutrition needs do not change with age.

Reality: Nutrition status of older adults has been shown to be a determining factor in the risk of falling, severity of injuries incurred and recovery time after a fall-related injury.

Prevent Falls by Staying Nourished

Eating consistent meals and drinking adequate fluids throughout the day will prevent falls from malnutrition and dehydration.

Eat to Fuel Your Body

Eat three meals and two or three snacks per day

(A meal= 3-5 food groups and a snack is 1-2)

- ◆ Eat your first meal within one hour of waking
- ◆ Aim for 3-5 food groups per meal (turkey sandwich, fresh fruit, steamed vegetable and glass of milk)
- ◆ Stop when full at meals
- ◆ Carry over foods not eaten at the meal to snacks, i.e. fruit, milk, 1/2 sandwich
- ◆ Additional snack ideas: whole wheat crackers, low-fat cheese, nuts, hummus, raw vegetables, fruit, granola bars

Need for Hydration:

- Urine is dark (yellow to butterscotch-colored), has a strong odor, infrequent urination (less than one bathroom break per 2-3 hours)
- Mouth is dry or sticky, dry skin, feeling of fatigue/tiredness

Adequately Hydrate

Your body uses about 2 to 3 quarts of water every day. If you are throwing up or having diarrhea, your body loses even more water. Being sick, spending time outside in very hot or cold weather can also cause dehydration. You will need to replace the liquids that are used throughout the day, even if you do not feel thirsty. When you lose too much water from your body, it is called dehydration.

How Much Water Should I Drink?

It is important to drink water throughout the day. Most adults need 6-12 cups of water each day to stay healthy. In order for your body to absorb the water, drink only 1-2 cups per hour. The more you weigh the more water you should drink. Carrying a water bottle can help remind you to drink water.

Why Water?

Water is your body's preferred source for hydration. Other liquids, like coffee, soda, flavored waters, juice and milk often contain calories, caffeine, sugar, or salt which need to be filtered by your liver and kidneys. Drinking calorie-containing beverages can also cause weight gain if you drink too much. At least half of what you drink every day should be plain water.

Resources

The La Crosse County Senior Nutrition Program offers hot, nutritious meals Monday-Friday at 9 different sites throughout the county. Contact the ADRC at 785-5700 for more information.

Home Delivered Meals are available through:

Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) 608-785-5700

Mobile Meals of La Crosse 608-784-4623

Contact the Hunger Task Force of La Crosse at 608-793-1002 to learn about emergency food resources, food pantries and free meals.

If you are in need of groceries, WAFER can lend a hand. 608-782-6003.

Be Safe from Head To Toe

Myth vs Reality

Vision

- Have your vision checked at least once a year and update your prescription eyeglasses
- Get your eyeglass frames adjusted if bent - it is usually free at any vision store

Foot Wear

- Do not walk in bare feet or stocking feet-too slippery. Shoes worn indoors are your safest bet.
- Slippers are too loose fitting. If you like, keep one pair of shoes just for indoors.
- Should not only be for style!
- Shoes should fit securely on your feet so you don't slip.
- Shoes should not only be supportive, but comfortable as well.
- Consider getting foot measurements for the correct length and width of shoes.
- Communicate with a sales associate for the best option for your specific activities and needs.

Foot Care

- See your healthcare professional if you have pain, calluses, corns, decreased sensation in feet or if you are unable to trim your own toenails.
- Ask a friend/relative or use a mirror to check your feet for calluses, corns, blisters, sores, discoloration or open cuts. If untreated, this can lead to infection—so seek medical attention.

Myth: I do not need to get my vision checked every year.

Reality: Vision is a key risk factor for falls. Aging is associated with some forms of vision loss that increase risk of falling and injury

Move Safely Outdoors in the Community

Be Alert to Hazards

- Cracks and uneven sidewalks
- Holes, dips and rocks when walking on grass
- Make eye contact with the driver before you cross the road, even on a pedestrian crossing
- A covered patch of ice or a pothole filled with snow
- Cross the road with a group

Walking Safely

- Scan ahead as you walk.
- Always walk on the sidewalk. If there isn't a sidewalk, walk facing traffic.
- Place heel down first then toes—when walking
- Keep head up, chin in, shoulders back. This helps you to look ahead & walk with confidence.

Getting Around the Community Safely

- Wear sturdy shoes. Consider traction devices for your shoes in the winter.
- Use the handrails
- Cross only at the lights and when signal reads "walk". If the light starts to flash "don't walk" when you are already crossing, don't panic and rush across the street, but continue at a safe speed.

Be Extra Careful in Windy Weather and when there is Snow or Ice

- Wear bright-colored clothing and carry a bright-colored umbrella.
- If you feel unsteady, remember to ask for help—it's a sign of strength, not weakness.
- Plan ahead for outings so you don't have to rush.
- Take slower, smaller steps when walking over snow or ice.
- Keep sidewalks and driveways well shoveled. Apply rock salt, other ice melting products or sand to create traction on wet/icy patches. If needed, get help with shoveling after a storm.

Resources

Vision Programs

- Office for the Blind and Visually Impaired 608-789-5663
- Wisconsin Talking Book and Braille Library 1-800-242-8822
- Visually Impaired Persons (VIP) Support Group 608-857-3138 or 608-788-7794
- Visually Impaired Support Group 608-781-3361 or 608-780-2591

Foot Care

- La Crosse County Health Department 608-785-9723
- Check local hair/nail salons for pedicure costs and services

Community Education Program

- Pedestrian Safety Programming and Educational Resources 608-709-2945

Be Safe, Not Sorry

Check Your Home for These Easy-To-Fix Safety Hazards

Stairs and Steps:

- Pick up things on the stairs. Always keep objects off stairs.
- Fix loose or uneven steps.
- Have an electrician put in an overhead light at the top and bottom of the stairs (You can get light switches that glow).
- Have a friend or family member change the light bulb that is burned out.
- Make sure the carpet is firmly attached to every step, or remove the carpet and attach non-slip rubber treads to the stairs.
- Make sure handrails are on both sides of the stairs and are as long as the stairs. Fix loose handrails or put in new ones.
- Consider adding contrast to clearly see the edge of each step.

Bathrooms:

- Put a non-slip rubber mat or self-stick strips on the floor of the tub or shower.
- Have a carpenter put grab bars inside the tub and next to the toilet.

Lighting:

- Should not cause you to strain your eyes.

Myth vs Reality

Myth: As long as I stay at home, I can avoid falling.

Reality: Most falls take place at home.

Floors:

- Ask someone to move the furniture so your path is clear.
- Remove the rugs or use double-sided tape or a non-slip backing so the rugs won't slip.
- Pick up things that are on the floor. Always keep objects off the floor.
- Coil or tape cords and wires next to the wall so you can't trip over them. If needed, have an electrician put in another outlet.
- Scan your pathway for uneven surfaces or ledges.

Kitchen:

- Keep things you use often on the lower shelves (about waist level).
- If you must use a step stool, get one with a bar to hold on to. Never use a chair as a step stool.
- Keep countertop clear of clutter and supplies secure.

Bedrooms:

- Place a lamp or flashlight close to the bed where it's easy to reach.
- Put in a night light so you can see where you're walking. Some night lights go on by themselves after dark.

Visit www.lacrossestopfalls.org to gain access to 'Home Safety checklists' for your personal use in your home. Click on the 'Home Safety Modification' page for links.

Another Topic to Consider...

Incontinence

- Problems with urine control, also known as incontinence, can happen to anyone at any age. It can also lead to a fall when:
 - you slip on the floor that is wet with urine
 - you have a sudden urge so you hurry to get to the bathroom to avoid an accident
 - you wake up often at night leaving you feeling groggy, which can decrease your balance
- Incontinence can be treated and often cured! Let your healthcare provider know immediately of the problem. Sometimes it is an infection that can be quickly treated with antibiotics and the incontinence goes away. Other urine problems can be treated with lifestyle changes, bladder training, exercise, medications or in some cases surgery.

Resources

If you need assistance with simple home repairs or modifications, call RSVP at 608-785-0500

Mobility Equipment

Use canes, walkers or any devices that help you stay safe.

- Talk with your health insurance representative
- Refer to phone book or google search: Medical Equipment or Rehabilitation Services

Loan Closet

Call the ADRC at 608-785-5700 for a list of Loan Closets in the area who may be able to loan you canes, walkers, or other devices to help you stay safe and are free to borrow.

Get Connected

Who To Call for Help

- Always call 911 in case of an emergency
- Notify your healthcare provider after a fall
- Ask Fire, Police, Emergency Responders for referrals to community resources after a fall
- Consider using a personal Emergency Response System
- Do a home safety check. Checklists are available at www.lacrossestopfalls.org
- Discuss your fall with your doctor, family, or anyone who is in a position to help you

Myth vs Reality

Myth: I don't need to talk to anyone about my risk of falling. I want to keep my independence.

Reality: Falls Prevention is a team effort. Bring it up with your doctor, family, and anyone else who is in a position to help. They may want to help you stay in your home as independent as possible.

I have had a fall

I can get up



I can't get up



Ease yourself up onto your elbows

Move onto your hands and knees

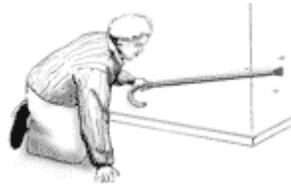


Hold onto a firm surface to support

Facing the chair ease yourself to a standing position



Turn yourself gently and sit on a firm surface



Can I attract attention?

- Shout and bang something
- **Press** your pendent alarm
- Use the telephone if you can

Can I get comfortable?

Find a near by pillow, cushion, rolled up item of clothing to put under your head



Can I keep warm?

Cover yourself with clothing, tablecloth or rug.



Can I keep moving?

Change position to avoid getting pressure sores. Move joints to avoid stiffness and help circulation. Roll away from a damp area if your bladder "Lets go"

Tell Your Doctor About Your Fall

From an original idea by Berkshire HNS Falls Preventions Services, UK - www.bhps.org.uk/falls

Resources

www.lacrossestopfalls.org is a website filled with information on falls prevention, safety, community resources and more.

Aging and Disability Resource Center 608-785-5700 to learn about Falls Prevention, Falls Prevention Awareness Week and Aging Resources.

Great Rivers 211 provides free information on all community resources, including falls prevention.

There are many different types of Personal Response Systems to accommodate your needs in case of an emergency. These involve a phone land line or phone GPS to contact 911 or emergency responders to assist you in the event of a fall or other emergency. For information concerning the different types of services available call Great Rivers 211.

Get Connected

La Crosse County Falls Prevention Coalition

Mission Statement:

The mission of the La Crosse County Falls Prevention Coalition is to reduce falls and to link older people to falls prevention community resources .

Who We Are:

The coalition is made up of interested community members and health professionals who have on-going concern over the high rate of falls in Wisconsin and in our local community. Members are engaged in disseminating information about proven falls prevention programs and educating older adults about how they can reduce their risk of falling.

Contact Information

The La Crosse Falls Prevention Coalition would like to invite anyone interested in local falls prevention to visit our website www.lacrossestopfalls.org

For more information or additional resources call 608-785-5700.

Falls Prevention Coalition Members

Aging & Disability Resource Center
Almost Family
BrightStar Care
Cass Street Pharmacy
Gundersen Health System
Home Instead
La Crosse City Fire Department
La Crosse County Health Department
Mayo Clinic Health System
Office of the Blind and Visually Impaired
Onalaska Fire Department
Tri-State Ambulance
Western Wisconsin Cares
YMCA

A Special Thanks to our Sponsors

Aging & Disability Resource Center
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MAYO CLINIC
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FOUNDATION



Western Wisconsin Cares
Dignity and Independence

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Please share this information
with friends and family.
If you would like a hard copy
of this brochure
call the
Aging and Disability Resource Center
at 608-785-5700.
They would be happy
to send you one.