

## Training for Retirement Module #2: Fall Prevention

### Falls in Canada Facts (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2011)

**Fact:** 1 in 3 seniors will experience a fall each year, and half of those more than once.

**Fact:** 40% of seniors' falls result in hip fractures.

**Fact:** 20% of injury-related deaths among seniors can be traced back to a fall.

**Fact:** Seniors are injured **at home** more than any other location. The bathroom and stairs are particularly dangerous.

### Risk Factors (NIH Senior Health, 2014)

- **Muscle weakness especially in the leg:**  
One of the most important risk factors!  
Those with weak muscles are more likely to fall than those with good muscular strength.
- **Balance and gait (how you walk):** Poorer balance and difficulty walking increases the chances of you falling.
- **Slower reflexes:** As you age, our reflexes slow down and this makes it harder to catch your balance if you start to fall.
- **Wearing unsafe footwear:** Ex. Backless shoes and slippers, high heels, shoes with smooth leather soles
- **Sensory problems:** Your senses may not be as sharp. Biggest example is numbness in your feet may mean you don't sense when you are stepping.
- **Poorer vision**
- **Poorer hearing**
- **Taking many kinds of medication:** People who take four or more prescription drugs have a greater risk of falling than do people who take fewer drugs. You should check with your doctor if you think your medications are causing dizziness or unsteadiness.
- **Blood pressure that drops too much when getting up from lying down.** Also known as postural hypotension that may result from dehydration, medications, diabetes or Parkinson's disease.



### Daily Dose: **Single Arm Wall Stretch**



Try these stretches in the bedroom when getting dressed.

With a straight arm, put your right hand on the wall at shoulder height. Slowly turn your body away from the wall to gently stretch the chest. Hold for 15 seconds. Alternate arms, to complete one set.

Complete 3-5 sets per day.



## You Can Prevent Falls! (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2011)

### Bathroom

- Ensure that you have non-slip surfaces in the tub or shower.
- Install grab bars by the toilet and bath to help you sit and stand. Make sure they are well anchored.
- Use a raised toilet seat, and a bath seat in the shower, if you need them.
- Wipe up moisture or spills immediately.



### Living Room and Bedroom

- Reduce clutter! Get rid of loose wires and cords as well as any other obstacles.
- Consider using a cordless phone to avoid rushing to answer.
- Have good lighting throughout the house and install night lights.
- Make sure the path is clear between the bedroom and bathroom.
- Scatter mats are tripping hazards. Get rid of them or make sure they are non-slip.
- Move slowly out of your bed or chair. Getting up suddenly can make you dizzy.

### Kitchen

- Store kitchen supplies and pots and pans in easy-to-reach locations.
- Store heavy items in lower cupboards.
- Use a stable step stool with a safety rail for reaching high places.
- Always wipe up any spills immediately to prevent slipping.
- If you use floor wax, use the non-skid kind.
- Ask for help with tasks that you feel you can't do safely.

### Stairs

- Make sure your stairs are well lit.
- Have solid handrails on both sides of the stairway.
- Remove your reading glasses when you go up or down the stairs.
- Never rush up or down the stairs. It's a major cause of falls.

### Exterior

- Keep front steps and walkway in good repair and free of snow, ice and leaves.
- Keep front entrance well lit.
- Put gardening implements such as hoses and rakes away when not using them.

#### Sources:

National Health Institute Senior Health. (2014). Falls and older adults. Retrieved from <http://nihseniorhealth.gov/>

Public Health Agency of Canada. (2011). You CAN prevent falls! Retrieved from <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/>

