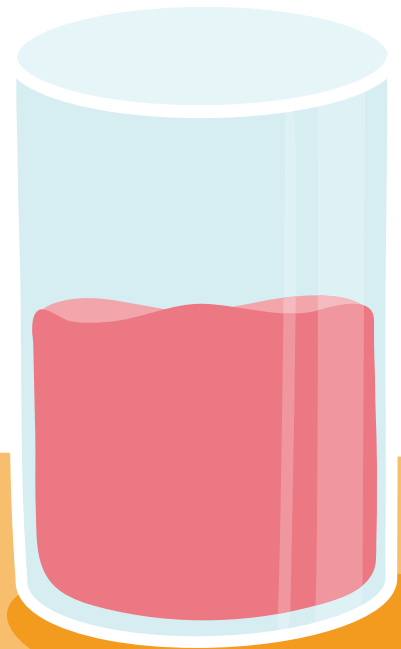




GUIDE TO
FALL
PREVENTION



Independence Begins with Prevention

Falling does not have to be an inevitable part of aging

Falls don't have to be an inevitable part of getting older. By better understanding and assessing fall risks, preventative measures—practical lifestyle adjustments and the adoption of products and services that support them—can be implemented. Through these preventative measures, we can reduce the number of falls and the severity of their outcomes—improving both your health and quality of life and keeping you active, independent, and in your own home as you age.

By the Numbers: Seniors' Risk of Falling

Most people underestimate how often elderly falls occur and how devastating they can be to your health. Statistics gathered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provide a snapshot of both the frequency and overall health implications of senior falls.

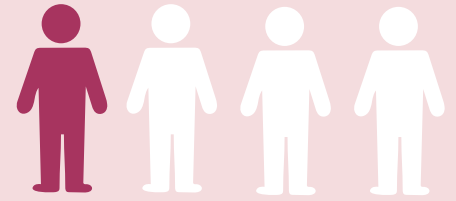


An older adult is treated in the E.R. for a fall every **11 SECONDS**



MORE THAN 32,000 DEATHS are reported from older adult falls every year

The total medical costs related to non fatal fall injuries for the elderly in the country amounts to a total of **\$50,000,000,000**



1 in 4 older adults falls every year

& those who do fall are

2x more likely to fall again

Why Do Older Adults Experience Falls?

Not only are older adults more likely to fall, they're also much more susceptible to fall-related injuries like a broken hip or a head trauma. There are several factors that contribute to both the frequency and severity of falling. Understanding and identifying them can help both older adults and their loved ones or caregivers take the proper precautions to help prevent a fall.

QUICK FACT

1 in 5 falls results in a **head injury** or **broken bones**



Cognitive Impairment

Confusion due to dementia and worsening memory increase the risk of falling

Recovery from Injury or Surgery

Common surgical procedures like a hip replacement can cause pain, weakness, and a significant drop in mobility

Medications

Side effects from medications—dizziness, drowsiness, a drop in blood pressure, confusion—can contribute to a fall

Sensory Limitations

Nerve damage can cause numbness in the feet, making it difficult to move around hazards safely

Environmental Hazards

60% of all falls happen at home and are caused by environmental factors like clutter, dim lighting, loose carpets, and slippery floors

Vision Changes

Age-related changes or impairments to vision—like altered depth perception can make it extra difficult to detect potential fall hazards

Chronic Illness

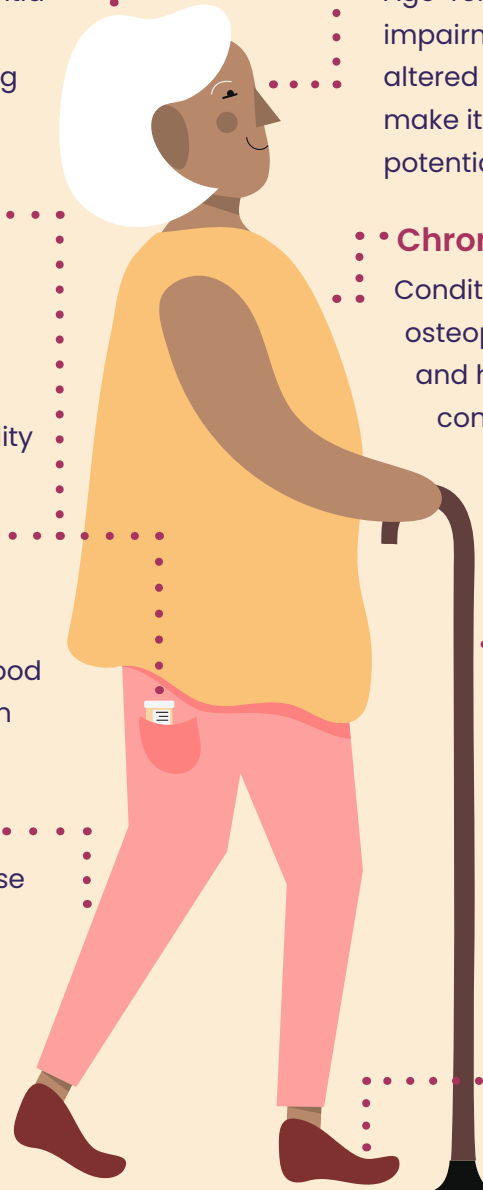
Conditions like arthritis, osteoporosis, low blood pressure, and heart disease or stroke contribute to both an increase in the number of falls and the risk of fractures following one

Impaired Control of Balance and Gait

Age-related changes to the sensory and skeletal systems can make it difficult to not only stay upright, but to also react to a sudden loss of balance

A Decline in Fitness

Reduced muscle strength, loss of balance and coordination, and reduced flexibility can all contribute to a fall



Reducing Your Risk of Falls

The first thing you can do to reduce these risk factors is also quite possibly the most important step: **Respect your limitations.** Getting older can be physically challenging, and you may feel like your mind can handle a certain task, only to find that your body cannot. Knowing your own limitations is not a weakness; **it is a strength that could eventually save your life.** Be sure to ask for help when you need it, and don't be too hard on yourself for having to outsource a task that your younger self may have been able to do without issue. You can also limit your medical risk factors. Talk to a doctor about any changes in your physical health that seem to impair your balance or throw off your depth perception.

And, also make sure to let your general practitioner know all the different medications you are taking, so that they can determine whether or not your balance issues have been caused as a side effect of medication. If you have been diagnosed with a chronic health issue that affects balance, such as multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, epilepsy, or even cardiovascular

disease, be sure to talk to your physician about ways in which you can combat dangerous falls. Finally, **reduce your environmental risk factors** by clearing clutter from main pathways in the house, securing area rugs to prevent buckling, replacing old light bulbs with brighter lights, putting non-slip treads and sturdy railings on the stairs, and installing grab bars in the bathroom to help prevent slips.



Change Your Habits To Prevent Falls

Before you look at physical areas within the home that might increase your fall risk, it's important to examine your own daily habits. Making a few small changes can have a sweeping effect on your health by lowering your risk of falls at home.

QUICK FACT

After a fall, **90%** of older adults who get help within **1 hour** will be able to return home to independent living

Exercise More

30 minutes of exercise a day is enough to maintain your mobility, flexibility, balance, and ability to avoid a fall

Don't Wear Baggy Clothing that is too Long

If your clothes are ill-fitting they are more likely to get in your way. Stay away from long pants or overly large clothes that may contribute to a fall

Get Your Eyes Checked

Help yourself avoid dangerous situations by having the proper prescription in your glasses, as well as being regularly checked for eye conditions like glaucoma

Wear Slippers

Hardwood floors, while beautiful, are also slippery and high-risk for falls. Wearing slippers can help with grip and stability on smooth flooring



Feel Safe In & Around Your Home

Accidents can happen anywhere at any time, but 60 percent of falls happen within the home. Since we often view our homes as a safe haven, to have something scary or traumatic happen at home can be quite a shock. You can keep your home feeling safe, however, by taking preventative measures to lower your risk of experiencing a fall at home.



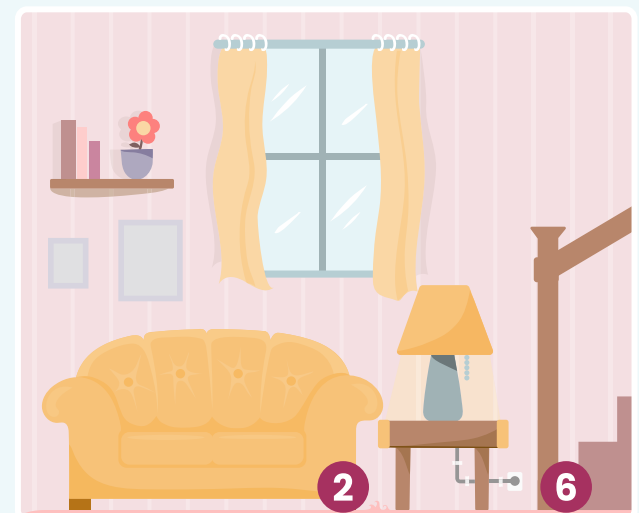
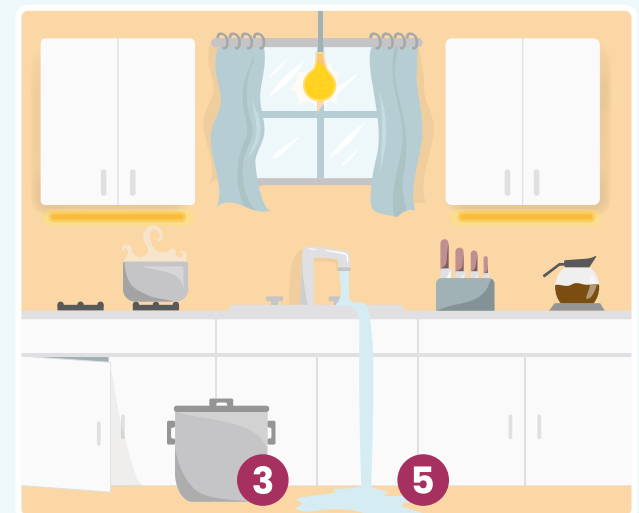
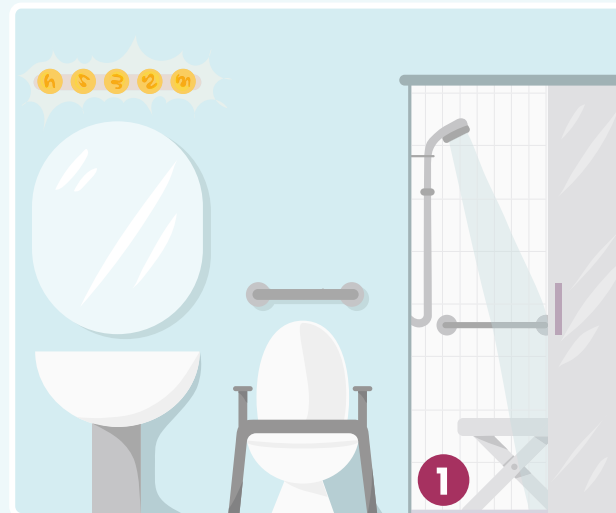
60% of all falls happen **at home**



Environmental Risk Factors

Most falls occur in the home, and there are certain rooms and items in the house that present a higher risk than others, including:

- 1 Bathtubs and showers that require you to step over a ledge
- 2 Area rugs and bathroom rugs
- 3 Situations that require you to carry a heavy object
- 4 Clutter on the floor
- 5 Kitchens, especially if there has been a spill
- 6 Stairs, especially those without an adequate railing



Stay Safer in the Kitchen

Filled with the comfort of cooking food, familiar smells, and memories of happy family gatherings, kitchens are the heart of a home. The kitchen can also be an intimidating space for seniors struggling with mobility problems, cognitive decline, and other health issues.

1. Bright Lights, Healthy Kitchen

All work areas in the kitchen should have ample lighting.

2. Don't Wear Loose Clothes While Cooking

Loose clothes can catch on fire over an open flame or pull a pot off the stove.

3. Properly Store Knives

All knives should be stored in a block, to avoid accidental cuts.

4. Keep Appliances on Your Countertop

Store your most frequently used appliances on the countertop.

5. Close Cabinet Doors

Closing cabinet doors can greatly reduce injuries sustained in the kitchen.

6. Keep It Clutter Free

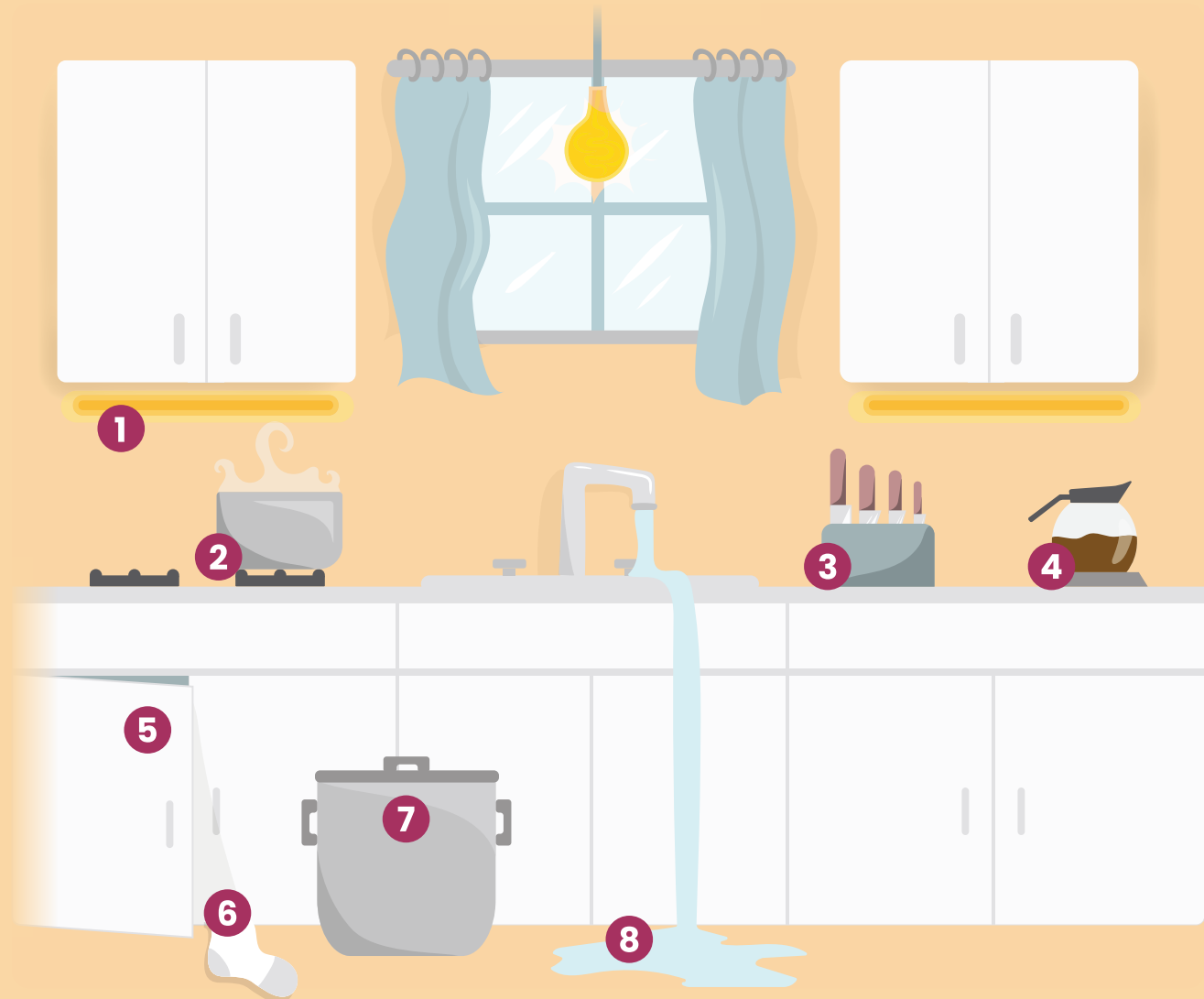
Eliminate the excess in the kitchen. Keep surfaces clear, especially the floor.

7. Store Heavy Items Below Waist Level

You have much less control of an object when you have to reach up to it.

8. Clean Up Spills

Any spill should be wiped up immediately to prevent a possible fall or slip.



Living Room Safety Precautions

It's called a living room for a reason: We do most of our living in it. The living room might also be the room with the most furniture, however, which could greatly increase your risk of falling.

1. Move Furniture Out of Walking Pathways

Do you have to walk around any furniture in your living room? If you do, then you should rearrange the layout of your living room.

2. Remove Unstable Furniture

Check the sturdiness of each piece of furniture to ensure nothing is wobbly.

3. Add Padding to Sharp Corners

In the case of a fall, your injury could become a lot more serious if you hit a sharp edge. Either remove the furniture or add soft padding to lessen the damage of potentially falling into it.

4. Keep Clutter Off the Floor

It can become easy for clutter to pile up in the living room, such as books, magazines, stacks of mail, and blankets.

5. Tape Electrical Cords to the Wall

Tape cords to the wall or have an electrician install an additional outlet for you.

6. Repair Loose Carpet and Raised Flooring

Any uneven surface instantly increases your chances of falling within your home. Whether carpeting is old or an area rug is bunching up, replace any type of flooring that doesn't sit flush.



Safely Navigating Stairs

As we age, our ability to navigate stairs and changing floor levels becomes more difficult. If possible, living in a house with a flat floor plan can eliminate some of the elements that pose a risk of an accident, such as falling on the stairs.

1. Keep Objects Off Stairs

Make sure the stairs are clear of any potential obstacles before using them to make sure your footing is stable as you go up and down.

2. Attach Non-Slip Treads

In some cases, it might be best to remove existing carpet and attach non-slip treads on each step for more security.

3. Fix All Loose or Uneven Steps

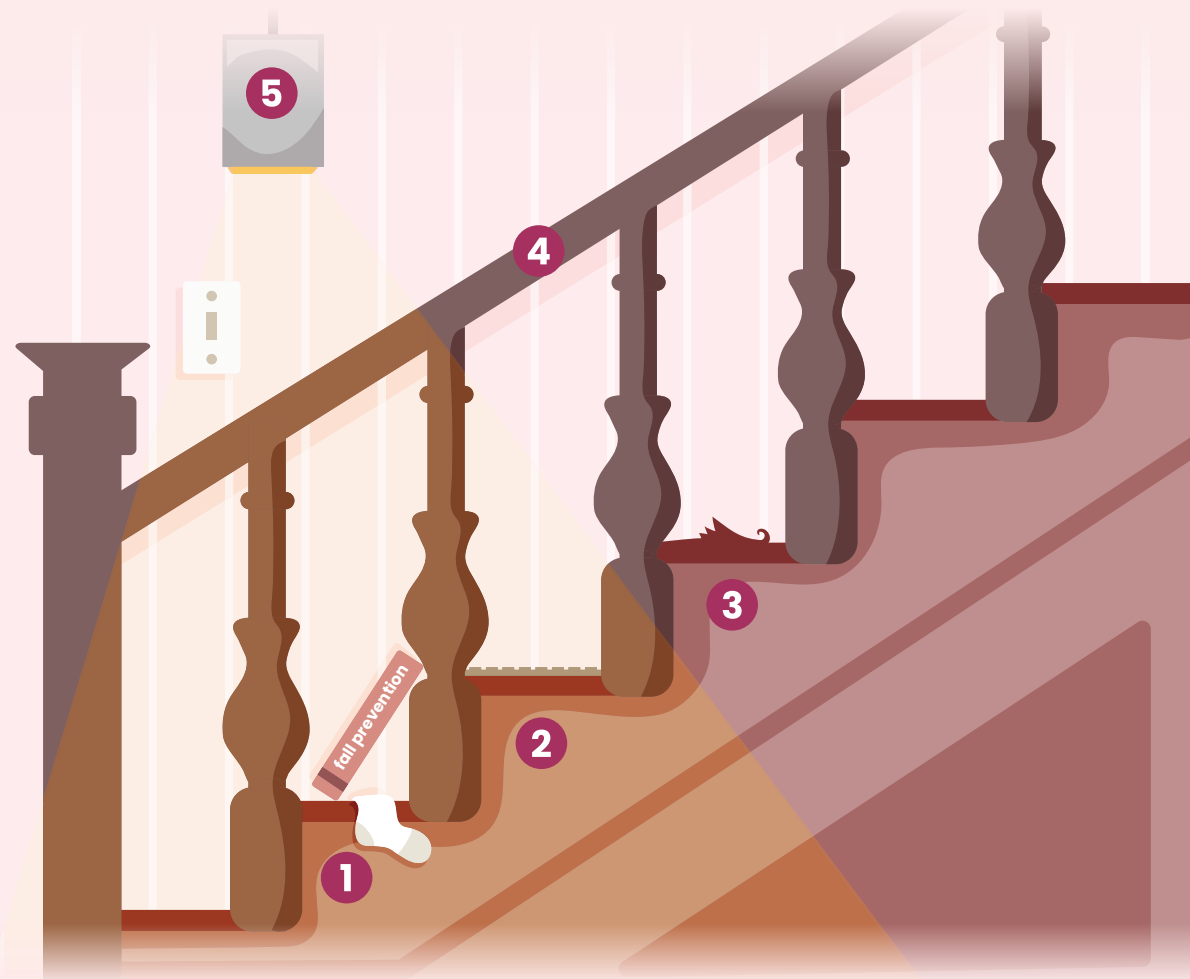
Loose or uneven steps that have warped and become uneven also pose a tripping hazard, especially at night or if you are not paying close attention to your footing.

4. Add Sturdy Handrails

Each side of the stairs should have handrails that run the length of the stairs to keep you supported every step of the way (pun intended!).

5. Install Overhead Lights

Have an electrician install overhead lights and light switches at the top and bottom of the stairs. Ask a family member or neighbor to change a light bulb as soon as you notice it go out to make sure that your pathway on the stairs is always illuminated.



Reduce Your Risk of Falls in the Bathroom

The bathroom presents even greater risks than the rest of the home due to the nature of the wet environment and the need to navigate different surfaces. Stepping over thresholds into bathtubs or showers, sitting or standing from the toilet, and bath mats or other items on the floor can prove to be difficult and even dangerous.

1. Raised Toilet Seats

Many seniors have difficulty getting up from the toilet on their own, and a raised toilet seat provides extra support and balance.

2. Handheld Shower Heads

With a handheld shower head, the shower comes to you. You can bathe independently while sitting in a shower chair.

3. Install Grab Bars

Install grab bars by the toilet, next to and inside the tub/shower to give you support as you lift yourself up in the bathroom.

4. Shower Chairs/Benches

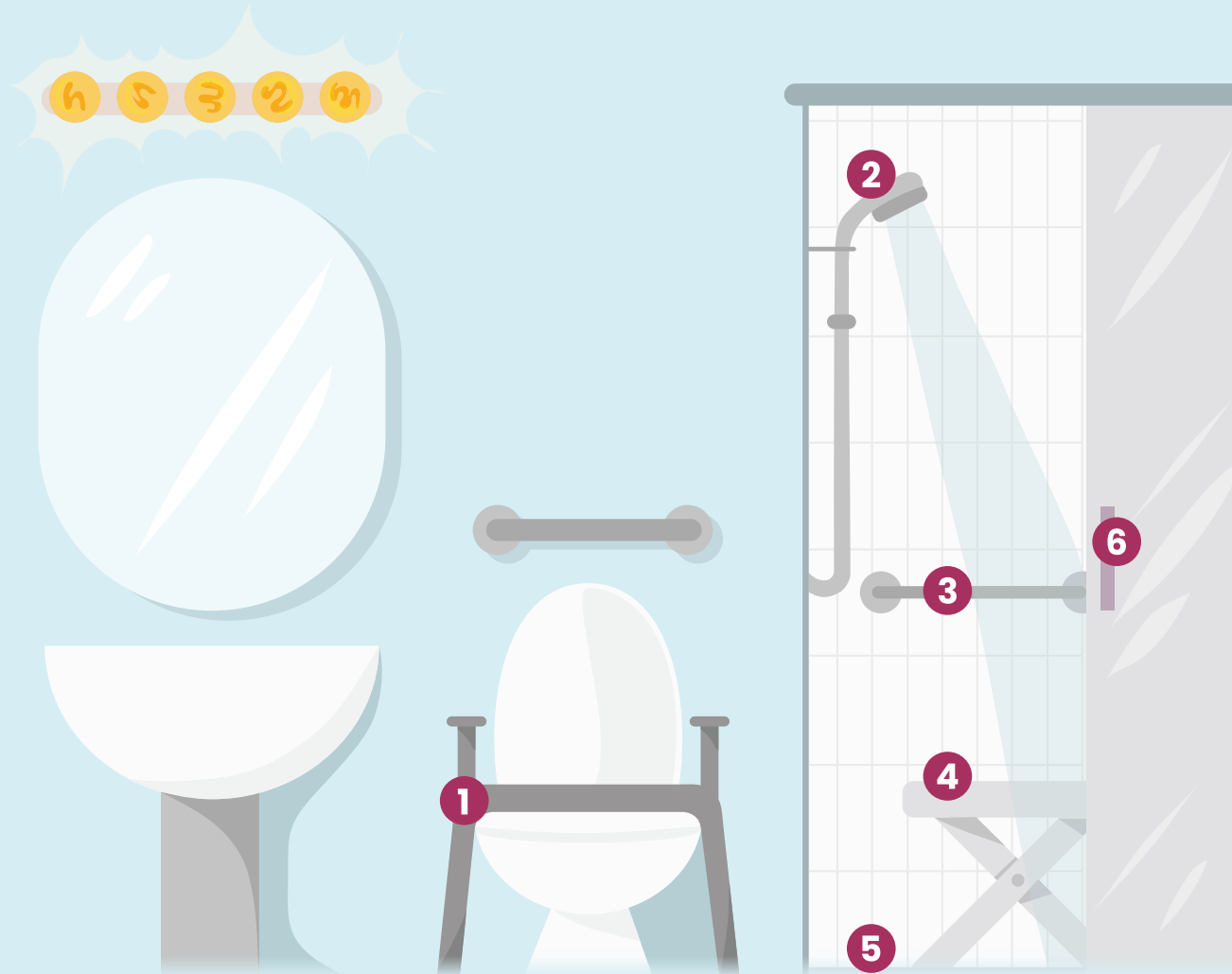
A shower chair or bathtub bench allows you to stay still, saving energy and using precautions to avoid falls.

5. Non-slip Mats

Place these mats both inside and outside your tub or shower and near your toilet and sink.

6. Walk-in Shower

Invest in a walk-in shower. This will eliminate the need to lift a leg over the ledge of a bathtub.



Stay Safe In Your Bedroom

Much of the time you spend in your bedroom is during the morning and night hours, when your bedroom may not have the best lighting, which can greatly contribute to your risk of falling.

1. Place Lamps Next to Your Bed

Add lamps on each side of your bed. Make sure you can reach them easily from the bed without over-reaching or stretching too far.

2. Keep Your Bedroom Clutter-free

Keep your bedroom free of clutter, as it increases your risk of falling, especially if your bedroom doesn't have the best lighting.

3. Open the Curtains

Opening up the curtains in your room will allow for better lighting.

4. Install Bed Rails

Bed rails remove the risk of falling out of bed. They also provide support for lifting yourself out of bed.

5. Take Your Time Getting Out of Bed

Allow yourself plenty of time to wake up in the morning. Getting up right away makes it difficult to maintain your balance.

6. Use Nightlights

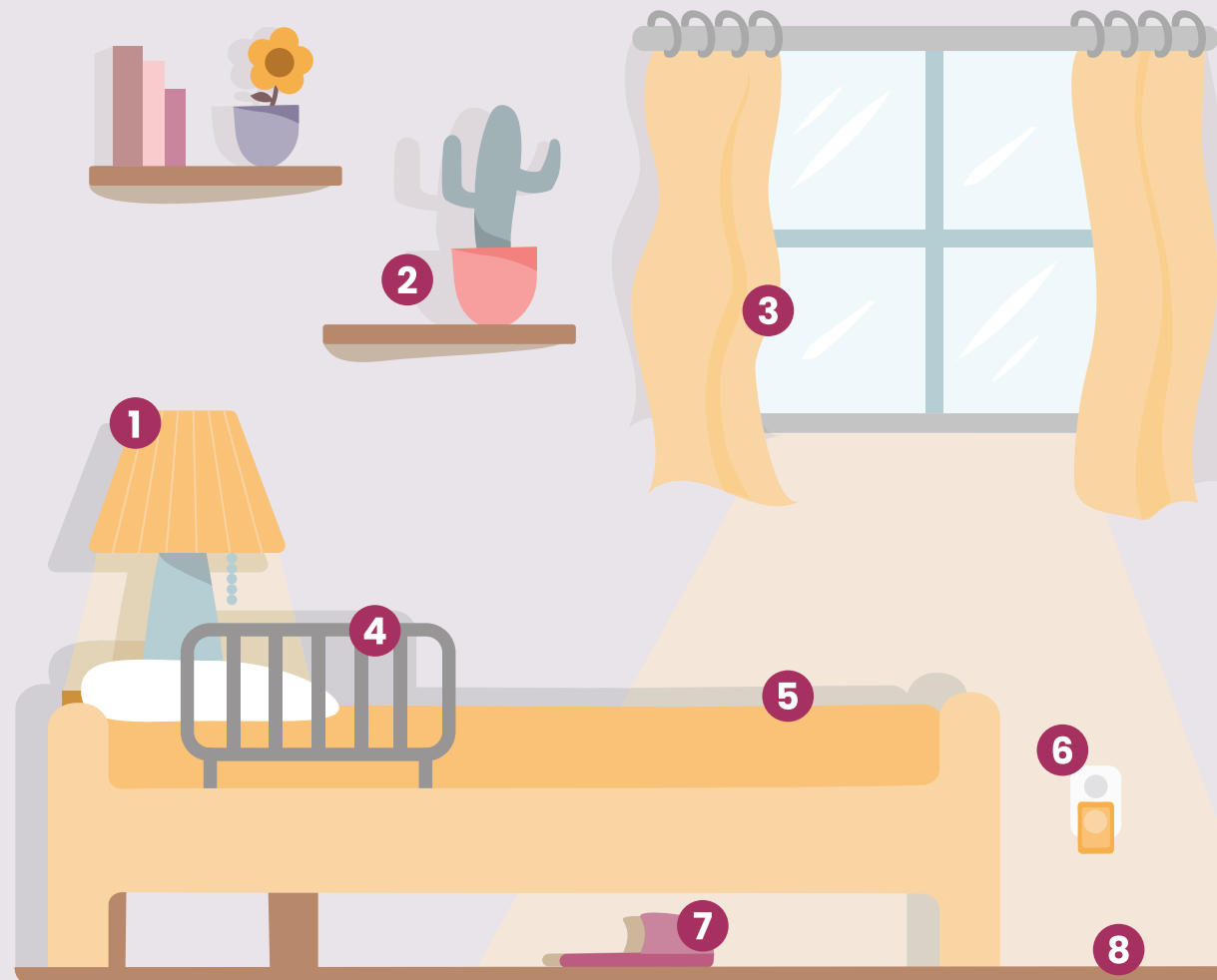
Have plenty of automatic nightlights in your bedroom and along the path to the bathroom.

7. Wear Slippers on Smooth Flooring

Ensure they have rubber soles to give you traction on smooth flooring.

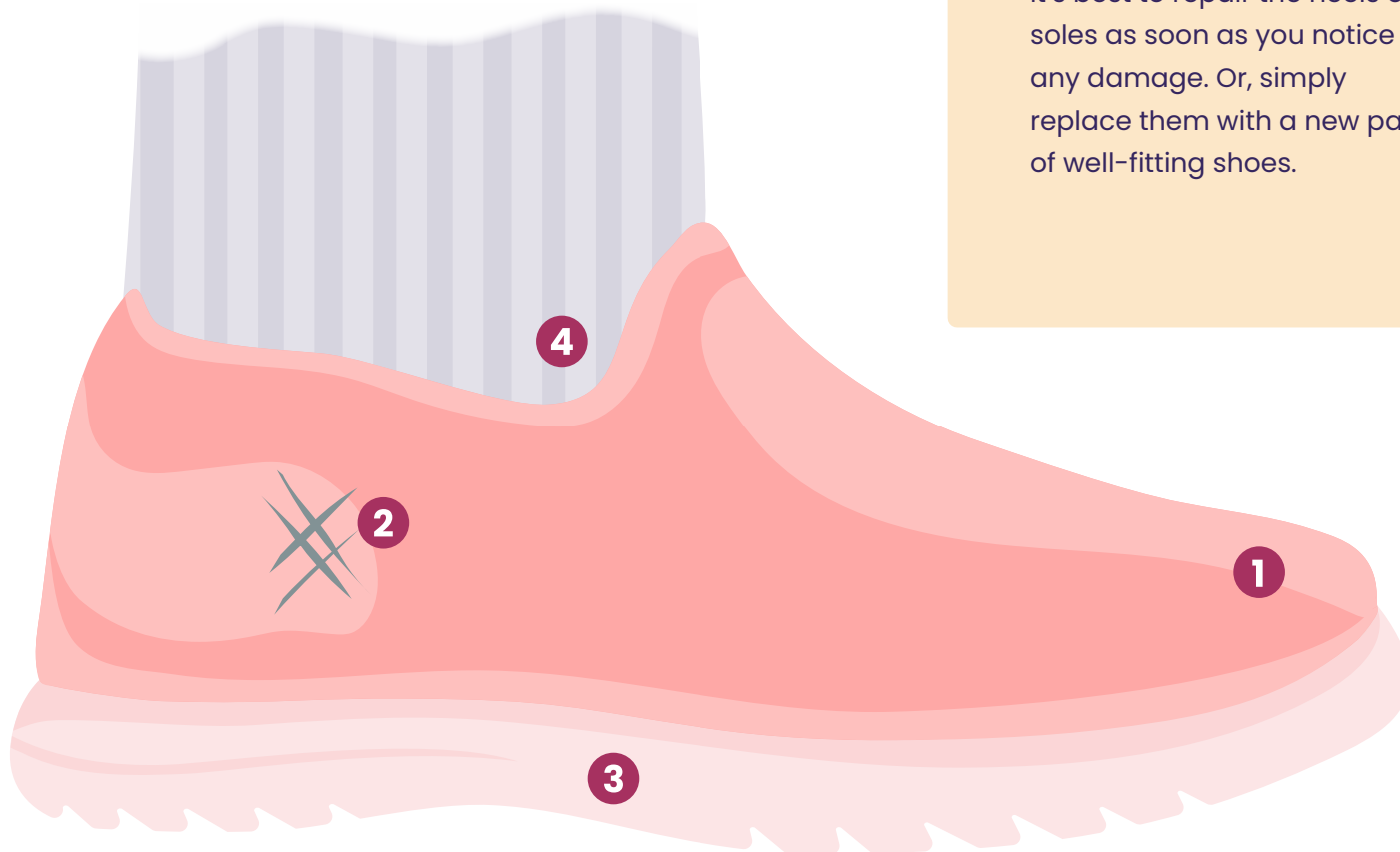
8. Discard Area Rugs

Area rugs immediately increase your risk of tripping.



Support Your Feet

Often overlooked when talking about preventing falls, the type of shoes that you wear regularly can have a big impact on your balance. Your shoes can either help or hinder your safety. Wearing the right shoes can not only be more comfortable, they can also improve your gait, balance, and coordination.



1. The Best Fit

If your shoe is loose, this makes it easier for you to lose your balance and fall. If your shoe is too small, you can get blisters and other foot discomfort that could affect your coordination. Having a good pair of shoes will lower your risk of falls.

2. Check for Wear and Tear

It's best to repair the heels or soles as soon as you notice any damage. Or, simply replace them with a new pair of well-fitting shoes.

3. Non-skid Soles

When looking for a pair of shoes that offer safety and support, rubber non-skid soles are essential. In addition to keeping you walking steady out in the world, it can also help you stay on your feet if you have hardwood floors in your home.

4. Avoid Socks Without Shoes

Wearing socks on smooth flooring is very dangerous as you are more likely to slip and fall. If you prefer not to wear shoes in your home, you can keep a pair of house slippers with non-slip soles by the door and change into them when you're in the house.

What To Do If You Fall

One in four older adults experience a fall each year. Of those fallen seniors over 90, 80 percent could not get up from a fall without assistance, and 30 percent remain on the floor for more than an hour as a result.



If you have made an attempt to get up from a fall and cannot lift yourself, you need assistance and will have to wait for help.



1. Take a Moment

Remain still on the floor or ground for a few moments. This will help you get over the shock of falling.



2. Assess the Damage

Determine if you're injured before getting up. Moving too quickly or in the wrong way after a fall can actually make the injury worse.



3. Roll to the Side

If you think you can get up safely without any help, slowly try to roll over onto your side.



4. Slowly Lift Yourself Up

Let your blood pressure adjust. Slowly get up on your hands and knees, and crawl to a sturdy chair.



5. Steady Yourself

Put your hands on the chair seat and slide one foot forward so that it is flat on the floor. Keep the other leg bent so the knee is on the floor.



6. Slowly Rise

From this kneeling position, slowly rise and turn your body to sit in the chair.

Enjoy Peace of Mind: Why Medical Alert Devices are a Great Choice

Having a medical alert device can provide both you and your loved ones with the peace of mind knowing that should a medical emergency, home intrusion, fire, or home accident occur, you are not alone. MedScope can provide you with reliable medical alert devices that connect you to help within moments of experiencing a fall, so you never have to worry about laying unattended on the floor for hours. With medical alert devices, you'll always have help when you need it most.

