



How to Prevent Falls: Tips for Cancer Patients and Caregivers

Anyone can fall, but some things can make it more likely for you to fall, or increase your risk for falling. Your cancer and cancer treatment can increase your risk for falling at the hospital or at home.

What are some fall risks and fall prevention tips based on my cancer treatment and lifestyle?

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|  | Activities and movement |
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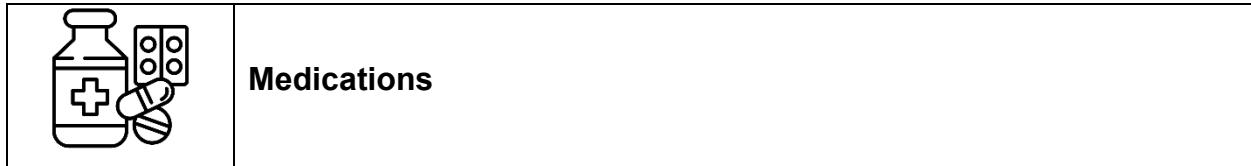
Things that can increase your risk of falling:

- Having difficulty walking, or unsteady walking
- Having had a fall before
- Feeling weak, tired, forgetful, confused, dizzy, or lightheaded
- Having pain, especially if pain increases with movement
- Not being able to see very well
- Numbness or tingling in your feet or legs
- Being dehydrated (not drinking enough fluids)
- Not getting enough nutrition or eating well enough

Tips to help prevent falls:

- ✓ Use a cane, walker, or wheelchair if you need to.
- ✓ When getting up from a lying position, always sit at the side of the bed for a few minutes before you stand up.

- ✓ Exercise regularly. Staying active makes you stronger and improves your balance and body movements.
- ✓ Eat foods that give you the nutrition you need.
- ✓ Drink fluids and stay hydrated.
- ✓ Have your vision checked at least once a year by an eye doctor.



Things that can increase your risk of falling:

- Taking multiple medications
- Taking certain medications, such as:
 - Medications that make you feel sleepy, such as Nyquil®, Tylenol PM®, Sudafed®, or sleeping pills
 - Cancer treatment medications
 - Medications to prevent seizures
 - Steroids
 - Pain medications
 - Some antidepressants and anti-anxiety medications
 - Water pills (diuretics) and laxatives
- Drinking alcohol while taking certain medications

Tips to help prevent falls:

- ✓ Avoid drinking alcohol.
- ✓ Have your doctor or pharmacist look at all the medications you take, including over-the-counter medications, herbs, and supplements.



Things that can increase your risk of falling:

- Clutter, loose items, or loose rugs on the floor
- Poor lighting
- Slippery surfaces (such as tile in the bathroom)

Tips to prevent falls in the home:

- ✓ Set up your furniture so that you can walk around without anything blocking your way.
- ✓ Use bright lightbulbs and a nightlight.
- ✓ Make sure electrical cords are taped down or out of the way, and remove throw rugs or other loose items that are on the floor.
- ✓ Wear non-slip shoes with low heels inside and outside the house. Avoid going barefoot or wearing slippers.
- ✓ Use assistive equipment when available, such as:
 - Handrails in stairways
 - Raised toilet seats or grab bars in the bathroom
 - Shower chairs and hand-held shower heads
 - Anti-slip stickers in the floor of your tub or shower
- ✓ If you receive any services in the home, your home care team will discuss fall prevention strategies and tips with you as well.

What are some other safety tips regarding falls?

- ✓ Keep emergency numbers in large print near each phone or in your cell phone.
- ✓ Think about wearing an alarm device that will alert someone in case you fall and can't get up.

- ✓ **Follow the ABCs of fall prevention:**
 - Ask for help: Call the nurse or nurse aide if you want to get up.
 - Be aware of your body: Do you feel dizzy or weak?
 - Caution: Is there enough light? Are you wearing shoes or slip-resistant socks?
 - Danger: Do not use unsteady items, such as the IV pole or bedside table, to get up.

What are some tips for preventing falls on my cancer treatment days?

- ✓ Bring someone with you who can help you get around.
- ✓ If you use a cane or walker, bring it with you and use it when you come for treatment. Wheelchairs are available for those who need them or may benefit from them.
- ✓ Ask for help when getting on and off the scale if you are weighed during your appointment.
- ✓ If you are receiving an infusion, ask for help before getting up from the infusion chair to avoid tripping on the footrest.
- ✓ **Change positions slowly, as the medications the nurses give you before your infusion starts can make you drowsy or dizzy.**
- ✓ If you need to use the restroom in the infusion area, **ask for help as soon as you feel you need to go - don't wait until the last minute! Also ask us where the nearest restroom is.**
- ✓ Have someone help you while you're in the dressing room or bathroom.
- ✓ Be careful around your IV pole, and ask for help with the pole if you need to get up while fluids or medications are infusing.
- ✓ **If you feel dizzy or weak, let someone know you need help!**

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