"It's not the broken hip, it's the nursing home I don't want. I need to be independent, so I take Tai Chi."

*Leonard Jones, age 74*

"People who use canes are brave. They can be more independent and enjoy their lives."

*Shirley Warner, age 79*

## Four things you can do to prevent falls:

1. **Begin an exercise program to improve your leg strength & balance**
2. **Ask your doctor or pharmacist to review your medicines**
3. **Get annual eye check-ups & update your eyeglasses**
4. **Make your home safer by:**
   - Removing clutter & tripping hazards
   - Putting railings on all stairs & adding grab bars in the bathroom
   - Having good lighting, especially on stairs

Contact your local community or senior center for information on exercise, fall prevention programs, or options for improving home safety.

For more information on fall prevention, please visit:

www.cdc.gov/injury

www.stopfalls.org

This brochure was produced in collaboration with the following organizations:

VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System, Geriatric Research Education & Clinical Center (GRECC), and the Fall Prevention Center of Excellence

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**
National Center for Injury Prevention and Control

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# Stay Independent

Falls are the main reason why older people lose their independence.

## Are you at risk?

# Check Your Risk for Falling

| Please circle "Yes" or "No" for each statement below. | | | Why it matters |
|---|---|---|---|
| Yes (2) | No (0) | I have fallen in the last 6 months. | 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. | 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. | 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. | This is also a sign of poor balance. |
| Yes (1) | No (0) | I am worried about falling. | 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. | 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. | This is also a sign of weak leg muscles. |
| Yes (1) | No (0) | I often have to rush to the toilet. | Rushing to the bathroom, especially at night, increases your chance of falling. |
| Yes (1) | No (0) | I have lost some feeling in my feet. | Numbness in your feet can cause stumbles and lead to falls. |
| Yes (1) | No (0) | I take medicine that sometimes makes me feel light-headed or more tired than usual. | 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. | These medicines can sometimes increase your chance of falling. |
| Yes (1) | No (0) | I often feel sad or depressed. | Symptoms of depression, such as not feeling well or feeling slowed down, are linked to falls. |
| Total_____ | | Add up the number of points for each "yes" answer. If you scored 4 points or more, you may be at risk for falling. Discuss this brochure with your doctor. | |

This checklist was developed by the Greater Los Angeles VA Geriatric Research Education Clinical Center and affiliates and is a validated fall risk self-assessment tool (Rubenstein et al. *J Safety Res*; 2011:42(6)493-499). Adapted with permission of the authors.

## Your doctor may suggest:

- Having other medical tests
- Changing your medicines
- Consulting a specialist
- Seeing a physical therapist
- Attending a fall prevention program