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# *Tompkins County* **Falls Prevention Resource Guide**



TOMPKINS COUNTY  
**OFFICE FOR THE AGING**

*Aging Better, Together*

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NY Connects/Tompkins County Office for the Aging  
31 Dutch Mill Road  
Ithaca, NY 14850  
[www.tompkinscountyny.gov/All-Departments/Aging](http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/All-Departments/Aging)

# Long Term Support Services in Tompkins County

## Titles in this booklet series\*:

- Housing for Older Adults in Tompkins County
- Long Term Support Services in Tompkins County
- Resources for Caregivers in Tompkins County
- Tompkins County Fall Prevention Resource Guide

\*This entire set of resource guides and other publications of the Tompkins County Office for the Aging are available online at:  
**[www.tompkinscountyny.gov/All-Departments/Aging](http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/All-Departments/Aging)**

The sample exercises on pages 11-12 were reproduced with permission from How to Prevent Falls, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition by Betty Perkins-Carpenter, Ph.D., Senior Fitness Productions Inc., 2006.

The inclusion of a resource in this guide should not be construed as an endorsement of a program, organization, or product.

Unless otherwise stated, services and price levels described in this booklet are those scheduled to be in effect March 2026 and are subject to change.

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31 Dutch Mill Road  
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## GETTING STARTED

*“Falling is simply NOT a part of growing older.”*

-Betty Perkins-Carpenter, Ph.D.  
Author of How to Prevent Falls

Although one out of four people over 65 fall each year and one in ten falls results in hospitalization, older adults everywhere are discovering they can control their risk of falling. There are many things you can do on your own, starting today! This resource guide can help you:

- Reduce your risk of falling
- Increase your ability to remain independent in your own home
- Continue the activities that you enjoy

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Begin by doing a quick “Falls Risk” self-check:

Do any of the following apply to you?

- I have had falls in the past year.
- I am afraid of falling.
- I take medications that make me feel unsteady, dizzy, light-headed or more tired than usual.
- I have difficulty moving around — negotiating stairs, getting in and out of vehicles.
- I need assistance with daily activities such as dressing, bathing or walking.
- I use an assistive device such as a walker or cane.

# Four Steps to Reduce Your Risk of Falling

## 1. Talk to Your Health Care Providers

If you checked two or more of the risk factors on the previous page, you may want to talk to your doctor or physical therapist about having a more comprehensive fall risk assessment done. The following are common conditions that can increase the risk of falls:

- Vision problems
- Joint/muscle weakness
- Foot problems/improper footwear
- Arthritis
- Dizziness when you change positions
- Osteoporosis
- Incontinence
- Medication side-effects
- Neurological problems

Check your insurance plan to see whether you need a physician's referral to have an assessment done by a physical therapist. Check with your pharmacist or doctor to find out if certain medications are making you weak or dizzy.

## 2. Practice Strength and Balance Exercises

You are less likely to fall if your muscles and bones are stronger. Exercises can also improve your coordination, flexibility, and gait. If you avoid exercise because you are afraid it may lead to a fall, tell your doctor so he/she can recommend a program for you or refer you to a physical therapist who can devise a custom exercise program for you.

## 3. Make Your Home Safer

Most falls occur in or around the home. Remove hazards from your home, make necessary repairs or modifications, light up your living space and use properly fitted assistive devices.

## 4. Have Annual Vision/Eye Exams

# STRENGTH AND BALANCE PROGRAMS

Be sure to speak with your doctor or physical therapist about what type of program is right for you.

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## Classes

**Lifelong** 607-273-1511  
119 W. Court St., Ithaca, NY 14850  
[www.tclifelong.org](http://www.tclifelong.org)

Classes at Lifelong: Enhance Your Fitness, Qi Gong, Zumbaboo, Bingocize, Strength Training, Tai Chi, Chair Yoga, “Breathe and Flow” Yoga, Balance class and Square Dancing. Lifelong-sponsored classes at other locations in the county that are open to the public:

- Lifelong/Library Place
- Brooktondale Fire Hall
- Jacksonville United Methodist Church
- Trumansburg Fire Hall
- Lansing Library
- Varna Community Center

Other locations may be possible. Please contact Lifelong.

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**Greater Ithaca Activities Center (GIAC)** 607-272-3622 ext. 2233  
301 W. Court St., Ithaca, NY 14850  
[www.cityofithaca.org/338/adult-program](http://www.cityofithaca.org/338/adult-program)

Recurring classes include Tai Chi and an Exercise Class.

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**MVPT Physical Therapy** (2 locations)  
2359 N. Tripphammer Rd., Ithaca, NY 14850 607-257-5009  
609 W. Clinton St., Ithaca, NY 14850 607-319-0046  
<https://locations.mvpt-physicaltherapy.com>

Classes held at 2 locations:

15 Ellis Dr., Dryden, NY 13053  
65 W. Main St., Trumansburg, NY 14886

607-844-5653  
607-387-7977

Classes: Ageless Agility, Ageless Fitness

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**TC3 Fitness Center**

607-844-6555

170 North St., Dryden, NY 13053  
[www.tompkinscortland.edu/fitness-center](http://www.tompkinscortland.edu/fitness-center)

Classes: Senior Fit, Hatha Yoga

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**YMCA**

607-257-0101

50 Graham Rd. West, Ithaca, NY 14850  
[www.ithacaymca.com](http://www.ithacaymca.com)

Classes: Building Strength, Gentle Water, Aqua Fit, Zumba Gold,  
Chair Yoga, Aqua Zumba, A Matter of Balance

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## **Strength and Balance Programs**

### **Ageless Fitness**

A program to improve strength, balance, coordination, reaction time and muscle mass. Includes initial individual screening tests.

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### **Tai Chi, Qi Gong**

Tai Chi is a series of slow and graceful movements that flow into each other. This low impact physical activity helps improve balance, flexibility, and muscle strength. Similar to Tai Chi, Qi Gong combines slow movements and can be practiced by individuals with different levels of physical ability.

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### **Chair Yoga**

Slow movements, breathing and balance exercises are performed while holding onto or sitting in a chair.

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### **A Matter of Balance**

A Matter of Balance is designed to manage falls and increase activity levels. This program presents ways to mitigate fall risk through gentle at-home exercise, home safety techniques and other simple adjustments.

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## Programs for Use In Your Home

Your physical therapist or physician may provide you with a program or set of exercises for you to do or give you an exercise booklet.

**OR**

You can purchase a book or DVD that contains exercises such as:



Revised 2019-How to Prevent Falls (book) by Betty Perkins-Carpenter, Ph.D.

140 pages

\$12.18 (used on Amazon)

**OR**

Use an online program from a reputable source such as:



Exercise and Physical Activity for Older Adults

Available at:

<https://order.nia.nih.gov/publication/exercise-and-physical-activity-for-older-adults>

You can download the PDF from the website listed above or pick one up at the TC Office for the Aging.

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# Sample Balance Exercises

(From How to Prevent Falls. See page 10).

Remember to check with your physician or physical therapist before beginning exercises.

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## FOR STARTERS:

- Stand with feet slightly apart.
- Place both hands on the back of a stationary chair in front of you.



1. Holding onto the chair, raise your right knee so your foot is a few inches off the floor. Allow your right leg, from knee to foot, to hang loose.
2. Hold this position and slowly count to three. Return right leg to starting position and relax.
3. Perform the activity with your left leg. Now repeat once with right leg, then with left leg.



4. Now “**play the piano**” by rippling your fingertips on the back of the chair.
5. While “**playing piano**”, repeat lifting your right knee and then your left knee (steps **1**, **2** and **3** above).



**6.** Now raise your right knee so that your foot is a few inches off the floor. Slowly, and relaxed, let go of the chair and gently raise your arms, little by little, until you find your **balance point**.\*

**7.** Hold this position as long as you can. *(At first, it might be just a fraction of a second, but gradually you will be able to hold your position for longer intervals).*

**8.** Return your hands to the chair and lower your right leg.

RELAX.

**9.** Repeat with your left leg.

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- Remember to maintain your posture-keep your back straight.
  - REPEAT all 9 steps of this exercise 4 to 5 times.
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\*Your “balance point” refers to the position in which, when you are balancing, your weight is evenly positioned and you feel comfortable, safe and secure.

# MAKE YOUR HOME SAFER

Ask for a **FREE**  
**Home Safety**  
**Assessment or**  
**Certified Aging in**  
**Place Evaluation**

Brought to you by the Tompkins  
County Office for the Aging.

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## Do-It-Yourself Home Safety Assessment Tools

### Home Falls Prevention Checklist

Take a few minutes now or when you get home to walk through your house, room by room, to identify fall hazards. Use the checklist in Appendix A on page 21 to help spot hazards.

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### Falls Home Safety Assessment Checklist

The image shows a document titled "Falls Home Safety Assessment Checklist" from the Tompkins County Office for the Aging. It includes a header with the county logo and name, a purpose statement, and a list of instructions. Below the instructions is a table with a "Date of Completion" column and several rows for different areas of the home, each with a corresponding page number.

Date of Completion	Page
_____	1-2
_____	3-4
_____	5-6
_____	7-8
_____	9-10
_____	11-12
_____	13-14
_____	15-16

You can pick up a free copy of this checklist at the Tompkins County Office for the Aging.

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## Professional Home Safety Assessment

Assessments can be provided by professionals who help you evaluate overall home safety and accessibility and suggest solutions to meet your specific needs.

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**Full Spectrum Rehabilitation and Wellness** **607-227-4421**  
2415 N. Triphammer Rd., Ithaca, NY 14850

Specializing in geriatric rehabilitation and falls prevention.

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**Tompkins County Office for the Aging** **607-274-5482**  
31 Dutch Mill Rd., Ithaca, NY 14850  
[www.tompkinscountyny.gov/All-Departments/Aging](http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/All-Departments/Aging)

Call to schedule a free home safety assessment or aging in place evaluation.

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## **Home Modification Resources**

**Private Contractor Certified Aging-In-Place Specialists (CAPS)** are professionals who guide consumers in modifying their homes to age in place. They include contractors and occupational therapists who complete courses, pass exams, and adhere to a code of ethics.

Below is a list of individuals within 20 miles of Ithaca who have CAPS certification current as of March 2026. For an updated list, go online to: [www.nahb.org](http://www.nahb.org) and search the “Directory for Professionals with Home Building Designations”.

### **Tompkins County Office for the Aging**

Andrea Davis 607-274-5484  
Amy Jackson 607-274-5486

### **Crown Construction**

Gary Slade 607-844-3993  
Adam Grosser  
James Wavie

### **Northstar Lifts**

Charles Freiburger 315-864-6006

**Rocco Design & Build**

Jeff Marianni

607-278-2022

**Barefoot Construction, LLC.**

Daniel Fisher

607-708-0841

**Full Spectrum Occupational Therapy, PLLC.**

Rebecca Fisher

607-227-4421

You may find names of contractors from acquaintances who have been satisfied with the work done for them. Before you hire, especially if it involves significant costs, shop around, get references and check them, obtain proof of insurances and get everything in writing. Never pay the full price up front.

The agencies listed in the next two sections may also have lists of contractors who do particular types of home modifications (e.g., installing ramps, chairlifts, accessibility modifications).

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## **Accessibility Consultations**

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**Finger Lakes Independence Center (FLIC)**

215 Fifth St., Ithaca, NY 14850

607-272-2433

[www.fliconline.org](http://www.fliconline.org)

FLIC offers information and referral for accessible housing, advocacy and other disability issues. Staff can visit your home for consultations, to make suggestions for improving building accessibility and to review architectural plans prior to construction.

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**Scott Jones**

Jones Accessible Homes, LLC.

607-220-7288

Installation of home accessibility items.

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## Help for Low-Income Households

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### INHS

115 W. Clinton St., Ithaca, NY 14850

607-277-4500

[www.ithacanhs.org](http://www.ithacanhs.org)

INHS offers several programs to income-eligible households. Their home repair programs for seniors or homeowners with disabilities provide minor home repairs and modifications, charging only for the materials. They can repair stairs, install handrails, grab bars, comfort-height toilets, install light switches, do other minor electrical projects, and patch loose flooring (tripping hazards). In some instances, repairs can be made to porches or sidewalks (tripping hazards).

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Repair grants and deferred loans are available for people who need important, basic repairs but can't afford to make loan payments, provided they meet income guidelines.

The Access to Home Program provides funding for safety and comfort measures for low-to-moderate income homeowners with disabilities or homeowners living with a family member living with a disability. Home accessibility improvements include, but are not limited to:

- Ramps, lifts, handrails, stair glides, doorway access
- Roll-in showers, grab bars and seats
- Modifications for the visually and hearing impaired
- Placement of bathroom or bedroom on the first floor
- Special thermostatic and environmental controls

# ASSISTIVE EQUIPMENT

Be sure to have a professional help you choose equipment that fits you as well as show you how to use it.

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## Equipment Loan

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### **Finger Lakes Independence Center (FLIC)**

215 Fifth St., Ithaca, NY 14850

607-272-2433

[www.fliconline.org](http://www.fliconline.org)

FLIC maintains a loan closet with various adaptive equipment for short-term loans, including wheelchairs, crutches, portable ramps, tub transfer benches and shower chairs. Clients can try out and borrow adaptive devices for vision, hearing, mobility and other impairments. Modular ramping systems are also available for loan that meet ADA requirements but are meant only for temporary use while waiting for a permanent solution to improve access.

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### **Trumansburg American Legion**

4431 Seneca Rd., Trumansburg, NY 14886

607-387-4212

Loan closet with wheelchairs, crutches, canes, walkers and commodes.

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### **Dryden Veterans' Memorial Home**

2272 Dryden Rd. (Rt. 13), Dryden, NY 13053

607-844-9900

Loan closet includes bathroom safety equipment, wheelchairs, crutches, canes and hospital beds.

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**Groton American Legion**

307 Main St., Groton, NY 13073  
607-898-3837

Loan closet items include canes, crutches, wheelchairs, hospital beds and bathroom safety equipment.

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**McLean Community Church, Steve Foote**

50 Church St., McLean, NY 13102  
607-898-3837

Loan closet includes canes, crutches, wheelchairs, hospital beds, walkers and commodes.

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**Equipment Rental/Purchase/Repair**

The agencies listed below sell assistive equipment related to falls prevention. They may also rent/sell other types of medical equipment and supplies (e.g., respiratory supplies) not mentioned in this listing. Check your insurance to see what might be covered.

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**Cayuga Medical Equipment**

40 Catherwood Rd., Suite A01, Ithaca, NY 14850  
607-339-0414  
[www.cayugahealth.org/services/medical-equipment](http://www.cayugahealth.org/services/medical-equipment)

Sells: power wheelchairs, lift chairs, scooters, shower chairs, benches and stair lifts.

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**Gerould's Healthcare Center**

200 S. Main St., Elmira, NY 14904  
607-734-7220  
[www.geroulds.com](http://www.geroulds.com)

Sells & Rents: power wheelchairs, lift chairs and scooters.  
Sells: shower chairs and benches, stair lifts.

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**Guthrie Med Supply Depot**

360 West Pulteney St., Corning, NY 14830

607-962-5205

[www.guthrie.org/locations](http://www.guthrie.org/locations)

Rents: power chairs, wheelchairs, and transport chairs.

Sells: all of the above plus commodes, canes, crutches, walkers, shower chairs, benches, and grab bars.

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**Lincare**

601 E. Church St., Elmira, NY 14901

607-732-1126

Rents: hospital beds, wheelchairs.

Sells: walkers.

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**Maximum Mobility**

120 North Ave., Owego, NY 13827

607-687-6205

Rents: manual wheelchairs.

Sells: power and manual wheelchairs, scooters, stair glides, ramps, power seat lift chairs.

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**UHS Professional Home Care**

222 Elmira Rd., Ste. 4, Ithaca, NY 14850

607-257-1425

Rents: wheelchairs and hospital beds.

Sells: lift chairs, transfer benches, grab bars, raised toilet seats.

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**Wonderful Wheelchairs**

1229 Trumansburg Rd., Ithaca, NY 14850

607-444-2817

Refurbishes used wheelchairs and makes them available to people in the Ithaca area who need them.

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**Enhance Mobility, LLC, Ben Bassett**

315-209-2170

enhancedride@gmail.com

Home visits to perform repairs on durable medical equipment.

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**Locating Other Assistive Devices/Products**

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**Personal Emergency Response System (PERS)**

Tompkins County Office for the Aging

31 Dutch Mill Rd., Ithaca, NY 14850

607-274-5482

[www.tompkinscountyny.gov/All-Departments/Aging](http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/All-Departments/Aging)

The Personal Emergency Response System (PERS) is a communication alert which links an individual with the Doyle Medical Monitoring Call Center in Rochester, NY. The button is on the unit or on a pendant worn around the neck (or bracelet). When pressed, it automatically dials an emergency rescue dispatcher. PERS units start at \$25/month. Optional features are available at an additional charge.

- Fall detection sensor
- GPS mobile service

*The Office for the Aging can also provide information on other Emergency Response Systems that are available.*



## APPENDIX A

### Check for Safety: A Home Fall Prevention Checklist for Older Adults

The following checklist and recommendations were produced by the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention):

[www.cdc.gov/steady/pdf/steady-brochure-checkforsafety-508.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/steady/pdf/steady-brochure-checkforsafety-508.pdf)

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#### Falls at Home

Falls are often due to hazards that are overlooked but easy to fix. This checklist will help you find and fix those hazards in your home. The checklist asks about hazards found in each room of your home and tells you how to fix the problems. At the end of the checklist, you'll find other tips for preventing falls.

#### FLOORS:

Look at the floor in each room.

- 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 items 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.

#### STAIRS AND STEPS:

Look at the stairs you use both inside and outside your home.

- Make sure the carpet is firmly attached to every step or remove the carpet and attach non-slip rubber treads to the stairs.

- Always keep objects off the stairs.
- Fix loose or uneven steps.
- Fix loose handrails or put in new ones. Make sure handrails are on both sides of the stairs and are as long as the stairs.
- Have an electrician put in an overhead light and light switch at the top and bottom of the stairs. You can get light switches that glow.
- Have a friend or family member change any burned-out bulbs.

### KITCHEN:

Look at your kitchen eating area.

- 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.

### BATHROOMS:

Look at your bathrooms.

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

### BEDROOMS:

Look at your bedrooms.

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



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## Other Things You Can Do to Prevent Falls

- **Do physical activity regularly.** This makes you stronger and improves your balance and coordination.
- **Have your doctor or pharmacist look at all of your medications,** even over the counter medicines. Some medicines can make you sleepy or dizzy.
- **Have your vision checked at least once a year** by an eye doctor. Poor vision can increase your risk of falling.
- **Get up slowly** after you sit or lie down.
- **Wear shoes both inside and outside the house.** Avoid going barefoot or wearing slippers.
- **Improve the lighting in your home.** Put in brighter light bulbs. Fluorescent bulbs are bright and cost less to use. It's safest to have a uniform lighting in a room. Add lighting to dark areas. Hang lightweight curtains or shades to reduce glare.
- **Paint a contrasting color on the top edge of all steps** so that you can see the stairs better. For example, use a light color paint on dark wood.

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## Other Safety Tips

- Keep emergency numbers in large print near each phone.
- Put a phone near the floor in case you fall and can't get up.
- Think about wearing an alarm device that will bring help in case you fall and can't get up.
- Look out for pets who may get underfoot or are resting on floors or stairs.



## APPENDIX B

### Medical Screening and Assessment

The material on the following two pages comes from the 2010 American Geriatric Society Clinical Practice guidelines found at:

[www.aafp.org/pubs/afp/issues/2010/0701/p81.pdf](http://www.aafp.org/pubs/afp/issues/2010/0701/p81.pdf)

The American Geriatrics Society has issued the following recommendations for screening and assessments by doctors and physical therapists for prevention of falls in older persons:

1. Each person should be asked whether he/she has fallen in the past year and, if so, about the frequency and circumstances of the fall(s). They should also be asked if they experience any difficulties with walking or balance.
2. Anyone who has had a fall should be evaluated for gait and balance.
3. Anyone who has problems on standard gait and balance tests should be given a comprehensive assessment.



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## **Comprehensive Fall Risk Assessment**

If you are curious about what a comprehensive assessment should include, the following are recommendations the American Geriatrics Society makes to physicians and physical therapists. Some of the terminology is unfamiliar to most of us, but this information will give you an idea of what might be covered.

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### **Focused History**

- History of falls: circumstances of the fall(s), frequency, symptoms at the time of fall, injuries, other consequences.
  - Medication review: All prescribed and over-the-counter medications with dosages.
  - History of relevant risk factors: acute or chronic medical problems (e.g., osteoporosis, urinary incontinence, cardiovascular disease).
- 

### **Physical Examination**

- Detailed assessment of gait, balance, and mobility levels and lower extremity joint function.
  - Neurological function: cognitive evaluation, lower extremity peripheral nerves, proprioception, reflexes.
  - Muscle strength (lower extremities).
  - Cardiovascular status: heart rate and rhythm, postural pulse, blood pressure.
  - Assessment of visual acuity.
  - Examination of the feet and footwear.
- 

### **Functional Assessment**

- Assessment of activities of daily living (ADL) skills including use of adaptive equipment as appropriate.
- Assessment of the individual's perceived functional ability and fear related to falling (i.e., is an individual curtailing involvement in activities he/she is safely able to perform due to fear of falling?).

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## Environmental Assessment

- This assessment includes home safety.

