
Tompkins County Falls Prevention Resource Guide



TOMPKINS COUNTY
OFFICE FOR THE AGING

Aging Better, Together

NY Connects/Tompkins County Office for the Aging
214 W. Martin Luther King Jr./State St.
Ithaca, New York 14850
(607) 274-5482
www.tompkinscountyny.gov/cofa

Falls Prevention Resource Guide

Titles in this booklet series*:

- Housing Options 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/cofa

The sample exercises on pages 11-12 were reproduced with permission from *How to Prevent Falls*, 5th 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 2024 and are subject to change.

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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 three people over 65 fall each year and one in ten falls result 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

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 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.

Classes

Lifelong

(607) 273-1511

119 W. Court St.
Ithaca, NY 14850

www.tclifelong.org

Classes at Lifelong: Enhance Your Fitness, Aging Mastery Program (AMP), Strength Training, Tai Chi, Chair Yoga, Balance Class and Square Dancing. **Lifelong-sponsored classes at other locations in the county that are open to the public:**

- Brooktondale Fire Hall
- Jacksonville United Methodist Church
- Trumansburg Fire Hall
- Lansing Library

Other locations may be possible. Please contact Lifelong.

Greater Ithaca Activities Center (GIAC)

(607) 272-3622

301 W. Court St.
Ithaca, NY 14850

Ext. 2233

www.cityofithaca.org/338/adult-program

Recurring classes include Tai Chi and an Exercise class.

More programs on next page

McCune & Murphy Physical Therapy**(607) 844-5653**15 Ellis Dr.
Dryden, NY 1305365 West Main St.
Trumansburg, NY 14886**(607) 387-7977****www.ptithaca.com****Class:** Ageless Agility, Ageless Fitness

TC3 Fitness Center**(607) 844-6580**170 North St.
Dryden, NY 13053**www.tompkinscortland.edu/campus-life/fitness-classes****Classes:** Senior Fit, Hatha Yoga

YMCA**(607) 257-0101**50 Graham Rd. West
Ithaca, NY 14850**www.ithacaymca.com****Classes:** Building Strength, Gentle Water, Aqua Fit, Zumba Gold



Description of Strength & Balance Programs

Ageless Fitness

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

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.

Chair Yoga

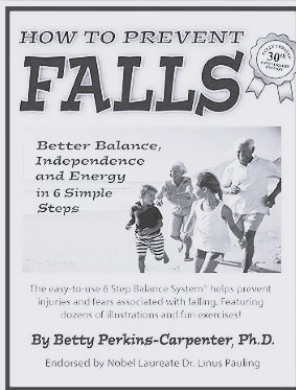
Slow movements, breathing and balance exercises are performed while holding onto or sitting in a chair.

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:



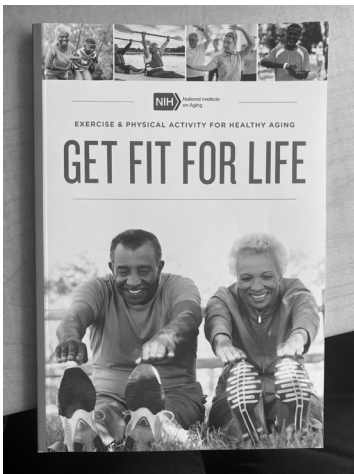
Revised 2019- How to Prevent Falls (book) by Betty Perkins-Carpenter, Ph.D.

140 pages

\$7.12 (used on Amazon)

OR

Use an online program from a reputable source such as:



Get Fit For Life: Exercise & Physical Activity for Healthy Aging

Available at:

<https://order.nia.nih.gov/publication/exercise-and-physical-activity-getting-fit-for-life>

You can download the PDF from the website listed above

OR

order the printed guide from the website listed above

OR

pick one up at the Tompkins County Office for the Aging.

Sample Balance Exercises

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

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

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.

-
- Remember to maintain your posture — keep your back straight.
 - REPEAT all 9 steps of this exercise: 4 to 5 times.
-

*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

Brought to you by the Tompkins
County Office for the Aging

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.

Falls Home Safety Assessment Checklist

The image shows a thumbnail of a document titled "Falls Home Safety Checklist". It includes a logo for Tompkins County Office for the Aging, a list of contact information for home accessibility assessments, and a table of contents for the checklist sections.

Home Accessibility Assessments

- 800-271-6268 Home Accessibility Assessments
- Email: info@tompkinscounty.org 607-255-2400 for more information

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

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.

Empowerment by Design Occupational Therapy

PO Box 506
Ithaca, NY 14851

(607) 351-1654

www.ebd-ot.com

Home safety evaluations, accessibility products, universal design and remodeling services.

Full Spectrum Rehabilitation and Wellness

15 Catherwood Rd.

Ithaca, NY 14850

(607) 227-4421

Specializing in geriatric rehabilitation and falls prevention.

Tompkins County Office for the Aging

214 W. Martin Luther King Jr./State St.

Ithaca, NY 14850

(607) 274-5484

www.tompkinscountyny.gov/cofa

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

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 2024. For an updated list, go online to: www.nahb.org and search the

Directory of Professionals with Home Building Designations

Andrea Davis	COFA	(607) 274-5484
Amy Jackson	COFA	(607) 274-5486
Gary Slade	Crown Construction	(607) 844-3993
Charles Freiburger	Northstar Lifts	(315) 864-6006
Jeff Marianni	Rocco Design & Build	(607) 351-6696
Mark Cushing	Rocco Design & Build	(607) 351-6696

You may find names of contractors from acquaintances who have been satisfied with the work done for them. Before you hire, especially if it will involve significant costs, shop around, get references and check them, obtain proof of insurance 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).

Accessibility Consultations

Finger Lakes Independence Center (FLIC)

215 Fifth Street
Ithaca, NY 14850

Voice/TTY (607) 272-2433

www.fliconline.org

FLIC offers information & 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.

Scott Jones

Jones Accessible Homes, LLC, Installation of home accessibility items.
(607) 220-7288

Help for Low-Income Households

INHS

115 W. Clinton St.
Ithaca, NY 14850

(607) 277-4500

www.ithacanhs.org

INHS offers several programs to income-eligible households. Their home repair programs for seniors or homeowners with disabilities provide small 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).

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

**The current Access to Home Program grant cycle closed in spring of 2018. Access to Home grants may become available locally again at some point in the future.*



ASSISTIVE EQUIPMENT

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

Equipment Loan

Finger Lakes Independence Center (FLIC)

215 Fifth Street
Ithaca, NY 14850

Voice/TTY (607) 272-2433

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 all ADA requirements but are meant only for temporary use while waiting for a permanent solution to improve access.

Trumansburg American Legion

4431 Seneca Rd.
Trumansburg, NY 14886

(607) 387-4212

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

Dryden Veterans' Memorial Home

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

(607) 844-9900

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

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.

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.

Empowerment by Design Occupational Therapy

PO Box 506
Ithaca, NY 14851

(607) 351-1654

www.ebd-ot.com

Rents: modular ramps

Sells: modular ramps, grab bars, transfer systems and lifts. Specializes in custom adaptive equipment

Cayuga Medical Equipment

40 Catherwood Rd., Suite A01
Ithaca, NY 14850

(607) 339-0414

www.cayugahealth.org/services/medical-equipment

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

Gerould's Healthcare Center

200 South Main St.
Elmira, NY 14904

(607) 367-6935

www.geroulds.com

Sells & Rents: power wheelchairs, lift chairs and scooters

Sells: shower chairs and benches, stair lifts

Guthrie—Med Supply Depot

402 Third St.
Ithaca, NY 14850

(607) 273-4727 or 1-877-815-2627

www.guthrie.org

Rents: power chairs, wheelchairs, and transport chairs

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

Kinney Drugs (downtown Ithaca location)

513 N. Cayuga St.
Ithaca, NY 14850

(607) 272-8333

Sells: wheelchairs and transport wheelchairs, commodes, canes, crutches, walkers

Lincare

410 Elmira Rd.
Ithaca, NY 14850

(607) 277-4027

Rents: hospital beds, wheelchairs

Sells: walkers

Maximum Mobility

129 North Ave.
Owego, NY 13827

(607) 687-6205 or 1-888-372-7222

Rents: manual wheelchairs

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

Professional Home Care

Ithaca Shopping Plaza
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

Wonderful Wheelchairs

1229 Trumansburg Rd.
Ithaca, NY 14850

(607) 444-2817

www.wonderfulwheelchairs.info

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

Locating Other Assistive Devices/Products

Personal Emergency Response System

Tompkins County Office for the Aging (COFA)

214 W. Martin Luther King Jr./State St.

Ithaca, NY 14850

(607) 274-5482

www.tompkinscountyny.gov/cofa

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 on a 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.



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/patient.html

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.

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 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 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.

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:

<https://www.aafp.org/pubs/afp/issues/2010/0701/p81.html>

The American Geriatrics Society has issued the following recommendations for screening and assessment 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.



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.

Focused History

- History of falls: circumstances of the fall(s), frequency, symptoms at 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 individual curtailing involvement in activities he/she is safely able to perform due to fear of falling?)

Environmental Assessment

- This assessment includes home safety.



