

ASSESS YOUR ACTIONS THAT PREVENT FALLS

DO YOU?	YES	NO
Always grip the handrails when using stairs?		
Have your telephone and emergency numbers easily accessible (and in large print) so you can get help if you fall?		
Keep stairs well lighted?		
Keep floors cleared and slip resistant?		
Remove loose carpets, cords, and other items you could trip over?		
Install grab bars and slip-resistant surfaces in your bathroom?		
Have you placed a non-skid mat on the surface of your bathtub or shower?		
Use only stable step stools with a top handrail?		
Have someone nearby to help when you climb?		
Stand up slowly from a sitting or lying down position?		
In your kitchen, put often used items on shelves that are easily reached?		
Use a night-light for the path from your bedroom to bathroom?		
Do you wear shoes, not slippers, inside and outside your house?		

Falls and fires are two leading causes of unintentional injuries and deaths among adults 65 and older. About two-thirds of all hospital emergency room visits by older people involve falls. Older adults have a higher death rate from fires than the general population. Most of these falls and fires can be prevented by taking action before hazardous events occur. According to data from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control:

- More than one third of adults 65 and older fall each year in the United States.
- Among older adults, falls are the leading cause of injury deaths. They are also the most common cause of nonfatal injuries and hospital admissions for trauma.
- Men are more likely to die from a fall. After adjusting for age, the fall fatality rate in 2004 was 49% higher for men than for women.
- Women are 67% more likely than men to have a nonfatal fall injury.
- Rates of fall-related fractures among older adults are more than twice as high for women as for men.
- In 2003, about 72% of older adults admitted to the hospital for hip fractures were women.
- The risk of being seriously injured in a fall increases with age.
<http://cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Falls/adultfalls.html>



Steps you can take to prevent falls? Here are some suggestions to reduce the risk of falling so as to maintain independence:

- Exercise regularly; exercise programs like Tai Chi that increase strength and improve balance are especially good. Consider using a trek pole when going for walks.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist to review your medicines—both prescription and over-the-counter—to reduce side effects and interactions.
- Have your eyes checked by an eye doctor at least once a year.

- Improve the lighting in your home.
- Identify potential hazards (e.g., loose rugs and carpets) in your home that can lead to falls.
- Source: From National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, CDC. Adapted from Consumer Product Safety Commission

RESIDENTIAL FIRES: *Every 18 seconds a fire dept. responds to a fire somewhere in the nation; a residential fire occurs every 78 seconds; about every 2 hours, someone dies in a fire.* The U.S. Fire Administration reports that fires most often start in 1-2 family dwellings in the kitchen (#1), bedroom (#2), living room (#3), chimney (#4), and laundry area (#5). In apartments, the kitchen is # 1, then the bedroom, living room, laundry area, and bathroom.

Tips for preventing fire deaths and injuries (source: Consumer Products Safety Commission, www.cpsc.gov):

- Never leave food unattended on a stove.
- Keep cooking areas free of flammable objects (such as, potholders and towels).
- Avoid wearing clothes with long, loose-fitting sleeves when cooking.
- Never smoke in bed or leave burning cigarettes unattended.
- Do not empty smoldering ashes in a trash can, and keep ashtrays away from upholstered furniture and curtains.
- Never place portable space heaters near flammable materials (such as drapery).
- Keep all matches and lighters out of reach of children. Store them up high, preferably in a locked cabinet.
- Install smoke alarms on every floor of the home, including the basement, and particularly near rooms in which people sleep.
- Use long-life smoke alarms with lithium-powered batteries and push buttons, which allow persons to stop false alarms quickly. If long-life alarms are not available, use regular alarms, and replace the batteries annually.
- Test all smoke alarms every month to ensure they work properly.
- Devise a family fire escape plan and practice it every 6 months. In the plan, describe at least two different ways each family member can escape every room, and designate a safe place in front of the home for family members to meet after escaping a fire.
- If possible, install or retrofit fire sprinklers into home.
- Add to this list ideas that you have heard others suggest prevent home fires (e.g., using gas/electric outdoor grills and microwave ovens and storing flammable materials).

Suggestion: next time you look in your mirror, say to yourself:
 “Happy, Healthy – Feel Fantastic! Boy Am I Enthusiastic!”