

# TRAUMA TOOLS: HOW CAN YOU HELP A PARENT OR FAMILY MEMBER REMAIN FALLS-FREE?

Because falls are a major threat to the health and independence of older adults — and the most common cause of hospitalization in this population — prevention is key. To see if your parent or family member is at risk, please perform the assessment below and take appropriate action.

Check “Yes” if your family member has experienced this (even if only sometimes)	NO	YES	What to do if “YES” was checked
Has your family member had any falls within the past six months?			Show this checklist to your doctor(s) to help understand and treat the risks.
Does your older family member take four or more medications (over the counter or prescription)?			Review the medications with the doctor(s) and a pharmacist. Ask which medications can cause drowsiness, dizziness or weakness as a side effect. Talk with the doctor about anything that could be a medication side effect or interaction.
Does your family member have any difficulty walking or standing? OR Do they ever appear unsteady on their feet?			Ask the doctor if physical therapy or treatment by a medical specialist would be helpful. Tell the doctors about pain, aching, soreness, stiffness, weakness, swelling, or numbness in the legs or feet. Discuss any difficulties with walking with the doctor.
Do they use a cane, walker or crutches? OR Do they hold onto things when they walk?			Ask the doctor for training from a physical therapist to learn which type of device is best, and how to safely use it. Often, seniors are using the wrong aid, or using it incorrectly.
Was their last eye exam more than two years ago?			Schedule an eye exam every two years to protect eyesight and balance. Ensure that the eyeglasses being worn are the most recent prescription.
Has their hearing gotten worse, OR Do you feel that your family member has a hearing problem?			Schedule a hearing test every two years. If hearing aids are being used, review how to use them to ensure that they are being used properly. Battery life can be very short, and the small size can make replacing the batteries difficult for a senior citizen.
Does your parent/family member exercise less than two days per week? (for 30 minutes each day)			Ask the doctor what types of exercise would be good for improving strength and balance. Find activities that they can participate in two or three days per week (senior centers, libraries, Tai chi, walking clubs).
Do they drink alcohol?			Alcohol tolerance decreases with age. In general, one alcoholic drink per day should be the limit. Some medications may increase the effects of alcohol.
Do they have three or more chronic health conditions (such as heart or lung problems, diabetes, high blood pressure, arthritis, etc)?			See the doctor regularly to maintain health. Report any health changes to the doctor as soon as they occur.