

# AT HOME FALL RISK ASSESSMENT

(each “no” answer indicates a need for a change in your home or your habits)

## HEALTH HABITS

### Exercise

- Y  N  Do you bend and stretch every day? (*this helps keep your joints, tendons and ligaments flexible.*)
- Y  N  Are you physically active? (*this is important to promote good muscle tone and balance.*)
- Y  N  Do you walk briskly or perform another type of weight-bearing exercise at least three times a week for 30 minutes or more each time? (*This helps your bones stay strong.*)

### Sight & Sound

- Y  N  Do you have your hearing tested regularly?
- Y  N  If hearing aids have been recommended for you, do you use them appropriately?
- Y  N  Do you have earwax build-up removed regularly?
- Y  N  If you wear prescription glasses, is your prescription up to date?
- Y  N  If you wear bi-focals, are you comfortable when you look down while standing and walking?

### Nutrition & Health

- Y  N  Do you get enough rest for your body and mind to be alert?
- Y  N  Do you have regular health screenings?
- Y  N  Have you asked your doctor if you have any medical conditions that might make you more likely to fall? If you have such a condition, have you asked your doctor what you can do about it?
- Y  N  If you are often dizzy or lightheaded, have you asked your doctor if it could be a side effect of any medication you take?
- Y  N  Are any medications you take weakening your bones? (*ask your doctor*)

- Y  N  Are you getting enough calcium and weight-bearing exercise to help prevent osteoporosis? (*Osteoporosis is a condition in which the bones become brittle and break easily.*)
- Y  N  To avoid unsafe interactions between the medications you use, do you talk with your pharmacist before you buy an over-the-counter medicine?
- Y  N  If you drink alcohol, do you drink only a little or moderate amount? (*Alcohol disturbs normal balance and reflexes*)
- Y  N  If you drink even a little alcohol, do you know if it is creating any unsafe interactions with your medications?

## GETTING AROUND

- Y  N  Do you take time to regain your balance when you sit up after lying down or when you stand up after sitting?
- Y  N  Do you wear supportive, rubber-soled, low-heeled shoes? Do you avoid wearing slippers or smooth-soled shoes on stairs and waxed floors? Do your slippers fit well, and do they have soles that provide traction? (*It is unsafe to walk in stocking feet.*)
- Y  N  If you occasionally feel dizzy, do you use a cane, walking stick or walker to help keep your balance on uneven or unfamiliar ground?
- Y  N  Do you watch for slippery pavement when walking outdoors? Do you watch for slippery pavement when you get into or out of cars or buses?
- Y  N  Are you alert to unexpected hazards in your path, such as out-of-place furniture, toys and pets?
- Y  N  Do you avoid walking on stairs or uneven surfaces in poorly lit public places, such as theaters?
- Y  N  When you carry bulky packages, do you make sure that you can see clearly around them?
- Y  N  When you must carry a large load up or down stairs, do you divide it into smaller loads, leaving one hand free to grasp the railing?
- Y  N  Do you avoid rushing to answer the phone or doorbell?
- Y  N  Do you avoid rushing to cross streets, especially in wet or icy weather?
- Y  N  Do you always use a step stool (never a chair) when you have to reach high places?
- Y  N  If you start to fall, do you know how to reduce your risk of injury?
- Y  N  If you live alone, do you contact a friend, neighbor or relative every day? (*If you*

*fell and couldn't make contact, would someone check up on you?)*

## HOME HAZARDS

### Entrances

- Y  N  Are your stairs and walkways well-lighted?
- Y  N  Do your stairs and have sturdy, easy-to-grip railings?
- Y  N  Are your outdoor stairs and walkways free to cracks, dips and holes?

### Living Areas

- Y  N  Can you turn on a light without having to walk into a dark room?
- Y  N  Does your favorite chair have armrests that are long enough to help you get up and sit down?
- Y  N  Are chairs and tables stable enough to support your weight if you lean on them?
- Y  N  Are small rugs and floor runners secured with carpet tape or nonskid backing?  
*(Rugs and runners are a major cause of falls. They should be fastened down with perfectly flat edges. Better yet, remove them altogether.)*
- Y  N  Are walkways kept clear of things that could trip you, such as cords, low furniture and toys?

### Kitchen

- Y  N  Do you use nonskid wax, no wax, or well-secured carpeting on the floors?
- Y  N  If you use floor mats, do they have backing that grips?
- Y  N  Can you reach the things you use most often without using a step stool?
- Y  N  Is the lighting bright enough for you to see well, but not bright enough to cause a glare?

### Halls & Stairs

- Y  N  Can you clearly see the outline of each step as you go up and down? *(Each step can be marked with brightly colored adhesive tape strips. Don't use shag carpets, deep-pile carpets, or carpets with busy patterns on stairs.)*
- Y  N  Are there lights and light switches at both the top and bottom of the stairs?
- Y  N  Do all stairways have securely fastened handrails on both sides of the stairwell? *(Rails*

- should extend beyond the top and bottom steps, and the ends should turn in.)*
- Y  N  Does your hand wrap easily and completely around the rail? *(Rails should be round and be anchored one to two inches away from the walls.)*
- Y  N  Do stairs have even surfaces with no metal strips or rubber mats to trip you?
- Y  N  Are stairs kept free of clutter?

## Bathroom

- Y  N  Do the tub and shower have rubber mats, nonskid strips or nonskid surfaces?
- Y  N  Do you have a grab bar on the wall or side of the tub or shower? *(If balance or weakness is a problem, you should use a bath seat).*
- Y  N  Is the floor safe? *(If it's slippery or has loose tiles or rugs, it's risky)*
- Y  N  Can you get on and off the toilet easily? *(If not, you should have a raised toilet seat installed and grab rail fastened into the wall studs next to the toilet)*
- Y  N  Do you hold onto grab bars when you get into or out of the tub or shower?

## Bedroom

- Y  N  Do you keep a light or flashlight within easy reach of your bed?
- Y  N  Does a night-light brighten your path to the bathroom?

Again, where you answered "no" to any question, is a fall risk. Be proactive about fall prevention and take steps now to prevent a fall later.

## IF YOU FALL:

- **Call for help.** Keep a telephone and emergency phone numbers on a low table. If you can't get up, you may be able to reach a low table.
- **Keep Warm.** While waiting for help, cover up with a blanket, coat or event a rug if that is all you can reach.
- **See a doctor.** Even if you don't think you're hurt, always see a doctor after a fall ... especially if you don't know why you fell. Falling can be a sign of illness or problems with medicines you are taking.