



TEN THINGS
EVERY LGBT OLDER ADULT
SHOULD KNOW ABOUT
FALLS PREVENTION

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), more than one-third of older adults ages 65 and older will fall at least once per year. Falls can result in bone fractures, head traumas, hospitalization, traumatic brain injuries and the increased risk of premature death and fatalities. While many falls can lead to hospitalization and other complications, you can reduce your likelihood of falling by following some important steps.

About Falls Prevention

- 1 Your risk of falling increases as you age.** Older adults ages 85 and older are four to five times more likely to experience a fall than adults ages 65-74—a sharp increase attributed to a loss in vision, weakened muscles and an increase in chronic conditions as one ages.
- 2 Falls are the leading cause for emergency room visits and overnight hospital stays for adults 65 and older.** According to the CDC, unintentional falls are the most common cause of bone fractures among older adults, which can affect the hips, arms, legs, hands, pelvis and spine. Additionally, falls can result in severe bruising and head trauma, including traumatic brain injuries with long and short term consequences.

- 3 Research suggests that falling rates can vary by gender.** While little research exists about falls among transgender older adults, research shows that men are more likely to die from falling, while women are twice as likely to be admitted to a hospital for bone fractures.
- 4 Falls most often occur from a combination of physical hazards and vision loss.** The CDC notes that pets can pose a serious fall hazard, with more than 86,000 adults annually falling as a direct result of their pets or their pets' toys, dishes or accessories. Additionally, walking around in poorly-lit areas of the home, combined with vision loss, increases the likelihood of falling.

Take Charge of Your Health

- 5 Keep track of any changes in your vision or balance.** If you begin experiencing a loss of balance, take notes on when it happened and what you were doing—sitting, standing or walking—and share these notes with your doctor. Ask about medications that might contribute to the risk of dizziness or imbalance, and decide together if your medication regimen should be altered.
- 6 Reduce the chances of falling at home by keeping entry ways, hallways and pathways in your apartment or house free of clutter.** Environmental obstacles include low-furniture (e.g. side-tables, stepping stools and throw rugs), long phone cords and loose wires. You should also keep all areas of the home well-lit, illuminating any dips or cracks in the floor or stairways, and place lamps wherever possible.
- 7 Participate in exercises such as Tai-Chi, walking and water exercises to improve your strength, balance and coordination.** Speak with your doctor about adding these activities to your schedule, or other activities such as physical therapy, to increase your balance and muscle strength. If needed, consider using a cane, walker or other assistive device.

- 8 Take extra precaution when surfaces are wet, both inside and outside of your home.** Rain can make pavement, stairs and floors especially precarious. Keep one hand available to grasp railings and banisters, use non-skid floor wax and put slip-protectors underneath rugs, doormats and mobile carpets. Additionally, install grab-bars or railings in the bathtub or shower, and put a no-slip mat on the bottom of the shower to prevent falls that are caused by slippery soap residue.
- 9 Take the extra time to move slowly and carefully throughout your home.** Rushing to answer the phone, open the door, or complete an activity can greatly increase your chances of falling. Take a few extra seconds to move cautiously and be aware of your surroundings.
- 10 Coordinate with a friend or family member to check in with you daily—and make plans for when you're alone.** Have a friend, or a SAGE Friendly Visitor, visit you regularly and check in with you. Additionally, you might consider wearing a “Lifeline/Alert” device in case you fall and are unable to reach a phone to dial 911.

To learn more about the variety of resources and programs that SAGE offers, please call us, or visit us online at [sageusa.org](https://www.sageusa.org).

SAGE COMMUNITY SERVICES

SAGE @ The LGBT Community Center
208 West 13th St., Room 207
New York, NY 10011
212-741-2217

SAGE Harlem Center
2090 Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. Blvd.
Suite 201, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10027
646-660-8953

KEY SOURCES AND ADDITIONAL READING

Falls Among Older Adults:
An Overview
Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention: National Center
for Injury Prevention and Control
[www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreational
Safety/Falls/adultfalls.html](http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Falls/adultfalls.html)

Falls in Nursing Homes
Centers for Disease Control and
Prevention: National Center for Injury
Prevention and Control
[www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreational
Safety/Falls/nursing.html](http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Falls/nursing.html)

Fall Prevention
National Council on Aging:
Center for Health Aging, Model Health
Programs for Communities
[www.healthyagingprograms.org/
content.asp?sectionid=6](http://www.healthyagingprograms.org/content.asp?sectionid=6)

Falls Prevention in Older Age
World Health Organization
[www.who.int/ageing/publications/
Falls_prevention7March.pdf](http://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Falls_prevention7March.pdf)

Fall Prevention:
6 Ways to Reduce Your Falling Risk
Mayo Foundation for Medical
Education and Research
[www.mayoclinic.com/health/
fall-prevention/HQ00657](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/fall-prevention/HQ00657)

Falls Prevention
Home Safety Council
[www.homesafetycouncil.org/
SafetyGuide/sg_falls_w001.asp](http://www.homesafetycouncil.org/SafetyGuide/sg_falls_w001.asp)

Services & Advocacy for GLBT Elders (SAGE) is the world's largest and oldest organization dedicated to improving the lives of LGBT older adults. SAGE's mission is to lead in addressing issues related to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) aging. In partnership with its constituents and allies, SAGE works to achieve a high quality of life for LGBT older adults, supports and advocates for their rights, fosters a greater understanding of aging in all communities, and promotes positive images of LGBT life in later years.

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