

The Villages®

Public Safety Department



Preventing Falls Among Seniors

**The Villages Public Safety Department
3035 S. Morse Blvd. The Villages, FL 32163
Office: 352-205-8280 - Fax: 352-205-8290**

The Problem...

For the past several years, falls have been the number one emergency for The Villages Public Safety Department. In 2013 the Department ran on 1,069 calls due to falls. In 2014 the number jumped to 1,110. We responded to nearly 1,157 falls in 2015. Fortunately, most people suffer only minor injuries, but for a significant number of people, falls can be life-altering. Without a doubt, falls are a real problem!

What can YOU Do to Prevent Falls?

Falls are not just the result of getting older. Many falls can be prevented. Falls are usually caused by a number of things. By changing some of these things, you can lower your chances of falling.

You can reduce your chances of falling by following these simple tips:

1. Begin a regular exercise program.

Exercise is one of the most important ways to reduce your chances of falling. It makes you stronger and helps you feel better. Exercises that improve your balance and coordination (like Tai Chi) are the most helpful. Lack of exercise leads to weakness and increases your chances of falling. You're never too old for exercise! Ask your physician or health care worker about the type of exercise program that is best for you.

2. Make your home safer.

About half of all falls happen in the home. To make your home safer:

- Remove things that you can trip over (such as papers, books, clothes, and shoes). Keep areas where you have to walk clear.
- Remove small throw rugs or use double-sided tape to keep the rugs from slipping.
- Keep items you use often in cabinets you can reach easily without using a step stool.
- Have grab bars put in next to your toilet and in the bath or shower.
- Use non-slip mats in the bathtub and on shower floors.
- Improve the lighting in your home. As you get older, you need brighter lights to see well. Lamp shades or frosted bulbs can reduce glare.
- Have handrails and lights put in on all staircases.
- Wear shoes that give good support and have thin, non-slip soles. Avoid wearing slippers and athletic shoes with deep treads.

3. Have your health care provider review your medications.

Have your doctor or pharmacist look at all of the medicines you take (including the ones that don't require a prescription). As you get older, the way some medicines work in your body can change. Some medicines, or combinations of medicines, can make you drowsy or light-headed which can lead to a fall. Medicines should help – not hurt!

4. Have your vision checked!

Have your vision checked by an eye doctor. You may be wearing the wrong glasses or have a condition such as glaucoma or cataracts that

limits your vision. Bifocals or trifocals can make stepping up on a curb (or stepping down) a lot more difficult. Poor vision can increase your chances of falling.

5. How about some help?

Don't be afraid to ask for help, particularly if you are walking in an unfamiliar location. Taking an out-stretched arm may be just the ticket! But remember, you may need regular assistance such as a cane or walker. If that's the case, be sure to have the cane or walker "fitted." In order for the cane or walker to be of benefit to you, it must be at the right height and able to support your weight. Learn how to use your cane or walker. You've got it to help you. Make the most of it!

If necessary, CALL 911

If a fall occurs, don't hesitate to call 911. The Villages Public Safety Department Paramedics and EMT's stand ready to help you when you call. Make sure to get checked out. It's better to be safe than sorry. You've heard it before:

**An ounce of prevention is
worth a pound of cure!**

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