

# You can prevent falls:

## By improving your health!

Your health is just as important as a safe environment in preventing falls and reducing the risk of injury. By improving your diet, increasing your strength and monitoring your balance, hearing, eyesight and medication, you can considerably increase your chances of avoiding falls.

### Eat well

Missing meals can cause weakness and dizziness. Eating regular, balanced, healthy meals will help you keep up your strength. *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating*\* is a good source of information.

### Keep fit

To prevent a decline in your mobility, strength, balance and flexibility, keep your muscles toned by accumulating at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity most days. If possible, walk every day, even if it's only around the house and engage in activities or an exercise class that will improve your strength and balance. Contact your local seniors' centre, Legion, or local recreation department to determine what's available. Consult *Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living for Older Adults*\* for more suggestions and information.

### Monitor your sight and hearing

People who cannot see or hear properly are at greater risk of falling. Be sure you wear appropriate glasses (wearing reading glasses while walking is dangerous!). Impaired hearing also puts you at risk of falling (if you don't hear traffic or children playing around you). Have your eyesight and hearing tested regularly. If you need glasses or a hearing aid, wear them!

## Know your medications

Medications can cause dizziness and weakness, affecting your perception and balance, especially if not taken as prescribed or if not suitable for you. Be aware of the potential hazards and interactions of the medications you use. Ask your doctor for information on the possible side effects of all your medications and feel free to raise any questions you may have about their benefits or undesirable effects.

## Practise moderation

The negative effects of too much alcohol on our sight, hearing, balance and judgement about personal safety are very clear. Whether used alone or combined with medication, alcohol use can result in dangerous falls, especially for older people. Keep to wise and moderate consumption.

\*You can obtain these publications free of charge by calling 1 800 O-Canada (1 800 622-6232)

*Please feel free to photocopy this Fact Sheet!*