

Did you know ...

Falls are the second leading cause of injury-related deaths to seniors aged 65 and older.⁴

Falls are the second leading cause of head injury in children.²

Falls are the leading cause of injury hospitalization in Alberta.⁵

Prevention Before the Fall

Falls can occur at work, home and play and can occur when moving from one level to another or on the same level surface.

Falls can result in:

- Sprains
- Strains
- Fractures
- Broken bones
- Head injuries.

Simple things can be done to prevent falls by following these three steps:¹

1) SPOT THE HAZARD

Anything that can cause someone to lose their footing or balance can be a potential hazard.

2) ASSESS THE RISK

Determine who is at risk from the hazards, how you can remove or alter the hazard to make it safe and how you can make others aware of the problem.

3) MAKE THE CHANGES – QUICKLY!

Don't delay in making a hazardous situation safer. Make the necessary changes before someone gets hurt.

Who is involved in serious fall injuries?

Children, workers and the elderly are most at risk for fall injuries, although falls can occur at any age.

Parents need to educate their children on how to play safe and prevent fall injuries.

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1 Think Safe. Slips, Trips and Falls. <http://www.wt.com.au/safetyline/homesafe/hsslips.htm>

2 Health Canada. For the Safety of Canadian Children and Youth. (1998) Chapter 7

3 Safe Start and BC Ministry of Health. Child Safety Update – Falls.

4 Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research Death Database, 1997

5 National Trauma Registry Report (1998). Hospital Injury Admissions 1995/96



Emergency Numbers:

Keep a list near the phone and easily accessible for:

- Ambulance
- Fire Department
- Police
- Poison Information Centre
- Family Doctor
- Neighbour with a car
- Home address and phone number available for babysitters and guests

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Children:

- Stairs – Keep stairs clear of clutter and also install a safety gate that locks at the top of stairs to prevent infants and toddlers from falling down
- Playgrounds – Children can fall from high levels or trip and fall on the ground. Always supervise children in play areas and make sure that the equipment meets CSA playground standards.
- High Chairs, Strollers and Shopping Carts – All of these devices have the potential to result in a fall injury if the child is not properly supervised and/or is not using proper safety straps.
- Windows – A child can fall through an opening only 10 centimetres wide³ and must be supervised at all times around open windows. Pull beds and furniture away from windows so that children can not climb and fall out. Install window locks for added protection.

Workers:

- Equipment – Make sure that equipment such as ladders and scaffolding are in proper working condition and used appropriately. Use safety harnesses and wear any other appropriate safety equipment
- Training – Employers should make sure that employees are provided with proper training for the equipment they will be using.
- Footwear – Wear the appropriate footwear for the job.
- Flooring – Make sure that foot surfaces are clear from obstruction and are not slippery or wet. Make sure stairs and paths are well lit. Mark any uneven surfaces with warning signs.

Elderly:

- Household surroundings – Make sure that stairs and walkways are free from clutter. Add handrails and grab bars in the bathroom. Remove loose rugs and ensure lighting is adequate. Make sure that ice, water and leaves do not obstruct pathways around the house.
- Physical factors – Practice proper nutrition and get regular exercise to maintain balance and strength. Wear proper footwear and use a cane if necessary to increase stability.
- Other – Osteoporosis, fear of falling, poor eyesight, and medications that make you feel light-headed or unstable can all contribute to a higher risk of falling. Address these problems with your physician.

Fall prevention in Alberta is a shared responsibility.

If you would like more information on this topic, contact:

Steady As You Go (Seniors Falls only) – Coordinator • phone (780) 413-7633

KIDSAFE Connection • phone (780) 407-7250 Edmonton • (403) 229-7833 Calgary

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