## Tompkins County

# Falls Prevention Resource Guide

Ask for a FREE Home Safety Assessment Today!

**Easy steps to help maintain your independence!**

FallsPrevention
STEP UP TO STOP FALLS

# Acknowledgements

This booklet was prepared by the Tompkins County Office for the Aging as one of the projects of the Tompkins County *Step Up to Stop Falls* initiative led by the Human Services Coalition and supported by a grant from the Community Health Foundation of Western and Central New York. It is available online at the Office for the Aging website: www.tompkins-co.org/cofa.

The sample exercises on pages 11-12 were reproduced with permission from *How to Prevent Falls*, 5th Edition, by Betty Perkins-Carpenter, Ph.D, Senior Fitness Productions Inc., 2006.

The inclusion of a resource in this guide should not be construed as an endorsement of a program, organization or product. Information provided in this booklet was obtained in the Spring of 2011 and is subject to change.

**Printed: May 2013**

*If you know of a falls prevention resource that might be included in this booklet, please let us know so we can consider it for inclusion in the next printing.*

Tompkins County Office for the Aging
214 W. Martin Luther King Jr./ State Street
Ithaca, New York 14850
607-274-5482
email: cofa@tompkins-co.org
www.tompkins-co.org/cofa

# Table of Contents

**Introduction: Getting Started**…...…….……...5

**Section I: Strength and Balance Programs**

1. Classes

Lifelong.……7
City Health Club..……...8
Finger Lakes Fitness ……8
GIAC ...…….……8
Island Health & Fitness....…….……8
McCune & Murphy Physical Therapy. . . ...……...8
Taoist Tai Chi Society.....……...8
YMCA ……...9

2. Programs for use at home.....…….…10

3. Sample exercises ...……...…11

**Section II: Make Your Home Safer**

1. Home Assessment

Home Safety Self-Assessment Tool (HSSAT)....13
CDC "Home Fall Prevention Checklist"…….…...13
Professional Home Assessments……...……..13

2. Home Modification Resources

Finding a private contractor..…..……14
Help for low-income households
Tompkins County Office for the Aging..……15
Finger Lakes Independence Center...…….15
Better Housing for Tompkins County……15

Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services.….16
Bishop Sheen Ecumenical Housing.....…...16
U.S.D.A. Rural Development....…… 17
Community Faith Partners.…….17

3. Assistive Equipment

Equipment Loan
Finger Lakes Independence Center…….18
Trumansburg American Legion……...18
Dryden Veterans' Memorial Home……..18
Groton American Legion…….19

Rental/Purchase/Repair
Empowerment by Design.....……...19
Franciscan Health Support.…….19
Gerould's Healthcare Center……...20
Guthrie–Med Supply Depot.……...20
Homecare Medical Supply.…….20
Kinney Drugs.…….20
Lincare……...20
Maximum Mobility…….21
Professional Home Care …….21
Sam Peters ……..21

Locating Other Assistive Devices/Products…..21

Personal Emergency Response System…...…...21

4. Home Falls Prevention Checklist…...……..22

## Appendix:

A. Medical Screening and Assessment...……26

# Getting Started

*"Falling is simply **NOT** a part of growing older"*

-Betty Perkins-Carpenter, Ph.D.
author of ***How to Prevent Falls***

*Although one out of three people over 65 fall each year and one in ten falls result in hospitalization, older adults everywhere are discovering they can control their risk of falling. There are many things you can do on your own, starting today! This resource guide can help you:*

- *Reduce your risk of falling*
- *Increase your ability to remain independent in your own home*
- *Continue the activities that you enjoy*

## Begin by doing a quick "Falls Risk" self-check:

***Do any of the following apply to you?***

- ❑ I fell within the past year or am afraid of falling.
- ❑ I am sometimes unsteady on my feet.
- ❑ I sometimes feel dizzy or light-headed.
- ❑ I sometimes have numbness or tingling in my feet.
- ❑ I take more than two medications.
- ❑ I have difficulty with my vision.
- ❑ I sometimes have to rush to the bathroom.

## Three Steps to Reduce Your Risk of Falling:

### 1. Talk to Your Health Care Providers

*If you checked two or more of the risk factors on the previous page, you may want to talk to your doctor or physical therapist about having a more comprehensive fall risk assessment done. The following are common conditions that can increase risk of falls:*

- Vision problems
- Joint/muscle weakness
- Foot problems/improper footwear
- Arthritis
- Dizziness when you change positions
- Osteoporosis
- Incontinence
- Medication side-effects
- Neurological problems

*Check your insurance plan to see whether you need a physician's referral to have an assessment done by a physical therapist. Check with your pharmacist to find out if medications are making you weak or dizzy.*

### 2. Practice Strength and Balance Exercises.

*You are less likely to fall if your muscles and bones are stronger. Exercises can also improve your coordination and flexibility. If you avoid exercise because you are afraid it may lead to a fall, tell your doctor so he/she can recommend a program for you or refer you to a physical therapist who can devise a custom exercise program for you.*

### 3. Make Your Home Safer.

*Most falls occur in or around the home. Remove hazards from your home, make necessary repairs or modifications, light up your living space and use properly-fitted assistive devices.*

**Section I:**

# Strength and Balance Programs in Tompkins County

⇨ *Be sure to speak with your doctor or physical therapist to decide what type of exercise program is appropriate for you.*

## 1. Classes

**Lifelong**
**119 W. Court St., Ithaca, NY**
**273-1511** **www.tclifelong.org**

Classes at Lifelong:
*EnhanceFitness®, Strength Training, Tai Chi, Yoga, Folk Dancing, Square Dancing*

Lifelong-sponsored classes at other places:

- *EnhanceFitness®* at McGraw House, Kendal in Ithaca, Juniper Manor I, Trumansburg, Enfield, Newfield Methodist Church, Dryden Veteran's Memorial Home.
- *Tai Chi* classes at
  Titus Towers Apts., Ithaca (Open to public)
  Lansing Library
- *Strength Training* classes at
  St. Catherine of Siena Church, Ithaca
- *Chair Yoga* classes at
  Ulysses Philomathic Library

**City Health Club**
**402 W. Green St., Ithaca, NY**
**319-4663** **www.cityhealthclub.com**
Classes: *Tai Chi, Qi Gong, SilverSneakers®*

**Finger Lakes Fitness**
**171 E. State St., Ithaca, NY**
**256-3532** **www.fingerlakesfitness.com**
Class: Gentle/*Restorative Yoga*

**GIAC**
**301 W. Court St., Ithaca, NY**
**272-3622**
**www.ci.ithaca.ny.us/departments/giac/adult.cfm**
Class: *Tai Chi*

**Island Health & Fitness**
**310 Taughannock Blvd., Ithaca, NY**
**277-3861** **www.islandhealthfitness.com**
Class: *Tai Chi*

**McCune & Murphy Physical Therapy**
**15 Ellis Dr., Dryden, NY**
**844-5653** **www.ptithaca.com**
Class: *Ageless Agility*

**Taoist Tai Chi Society**
**1201 N. Tioga St., Ithaca, NY** **Ithaca.ny@taoist.org**
**277-5491** **www.ithaca.newyork.usa.taoist.org**
Class: *Tai Chi*
Also held at Newfield Elementary School, Trumansburg firehouse, Boiceville Cottages Meeting House, Kendal at Ithaca.

**YMCA**
**50 Graham Rd. West, Ithaca, NY**
**257-0101** **www.ithacaymca.com**
Classes: *Building Strength, Tai Chi*

## Description of Strength & Balance Programs

**Ageless Agility**
A program to improve strength, balance, coordination, reaction time and muscle mass. Includes initial individual screening tests.

**EnhanceFitness®**
The program focuses on stretching, flexibility, balance, low-impact aerobics and strength-training exercises. Doctor permission required.(*www.projectenhance.org.)*

**SilverSneakers®**
This program is designed to promote strength, flexibility, balance and endurance in older adults. Some health insurance plans provide coverage for participants.

**Tai Chi**
The ancient Chinese practice of Tai Chi. Tai Chi is a series of slow and graceful movements that flow into each other. This low-impact physical activity helps improve balance, flexibility and muscle strength. .

**Qi Gong**
Similar to Tai Chi, Qi Gong combines slow movements and can be practiced by individuals with different levels of physical ability.

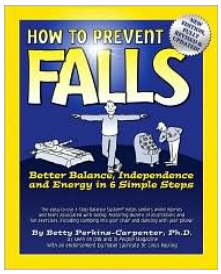
**Chair Yoga**
Slow movements, breathing and balance exercises are performed while holding onto or sitting in a chair.

## 2. Programs for Use in Your Home

**Your physical therapist or physician may provide you with a program or set of exercises** for you to do or give you an exercise booklet.

**or**

**You can purchase a book or DVD** that contains exercises such as:




How to Prevent Falls (book)
by Betty Perkins-Carpenter, Ph.D.
138 pages. $16.95 plus $4.50 shipping.

Send check or money order to:
Senior Fitness Productions, Inc.
1780 Penfield Rd., Penfield, NY 14526-2104
1-800-306-3137
(Order online: **www.howtopreventfalls.com/buynow.html)**

**or**

**Use an online program** from a reputable source (after discussing it with your physician or physical therapist) such as:
*Exercise and Physical Activity: Your Everyday Guide from the National Institute on Aging,*
found at: **www.nia.nih.gov/HealthInformation/Publications/ExerciseGuide.** Chapter 4 provides sample strength and balance exercises.

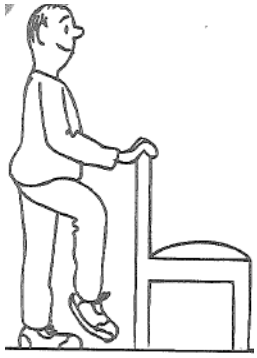
## 3. Sample Balance Exercises

(from **How to Prevent Falls**. See page 10)

*Remember to check with your physician or physical therapist before beginning exercises.*

**FOR STARTERS:**

Stand with feet slightly apart. Place both hands on the back of a stationary chair in front of you.



1. Holding onto the chair, raise your right knee so your foot is a few inches off the floor.

   Allow your right leg, from knee to foot, to hang loose.

2. Hold this position and slowly count to three.

   Return right leg to starting position and relax.

3. Perform the activity with your left leg.

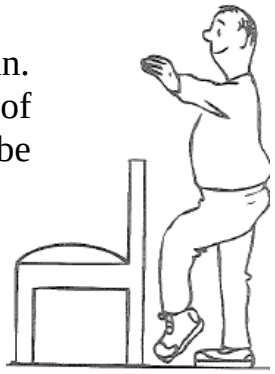
   Now repeat once with right leg, then with left leg.

4. Now "play the piano" by rippling your finger-tips on the back of the chair.

5. While "playing piano," repeat lifting your right knee and then your left knee (steps 1, 2 and 3 above.)

**Section 2:**

6. Now, raise your right knee so that your foot is a few inches off the floor. Slowly, and relaxed, let go of the chair and gently raise your arms, little by little, until you find your balance point.*



7. Hold this position as long as you can. (At first, it might be just a fraction of a second, but gradually you will be able to hold your position for longer intervals).

8. Return your hands to the chair and lower your right leg. RELAX.

9. Repeat with your left leg.

*Remember to maintain your posture– keep straight back.*

(REPEAT: 4 to 5 times)

---

* Your "Balance Point" refers to the position in which, when you are balancing, your weight is evenly positioned and you feel comfortable, safe and secure.

Ask for a FREE Home Safety Assessment Today! Brought to you by the Tompkins County Office for the Aging.

# Make Your Home Safer

## 1. Home Assessment

*You can use a checklist to go through your house, room by room, to identify fall hazards. The following resources also offer suggestions for how to fix the hazards that you identify.*

- **HSSAT (Home Safety Self-Assessment Tool)**
  An excellent online tool available at www.agingresearch.buffalo.edu. You can also pick up a free copy of this booklet at the Tompkins County Office for the Aging.

- **CDC Checklist**
  A "Home Fall Prevention Checklist for Older Adults" is included in this guide beginning on page 22.

- **Professional Home Safety Assessments**
  Assessments can be provided by professionals who help you evaluate overall home safety and accessibility and suggest solutions to meet your specific needs.

  **Empowerment by Design Occupational Therapy**
  **PO Box 506, Ithaca, NY 14851**
  **351-1654** **www.ebd-ot.com**
  Home safety evaluations, accessibility products, universal design and remodeling services.

  **Rebecca Norman, OTR/L**
  **Ithaca, NY 14850**

**227-4421 www.rebeccanormanotr.com**
Ms. Norman is an occupational therapist specializing in geriatric rehabilitation and falls prevention.

**Tompkins County Office for the Aging**
**214 W. Martin Luther King Jr./State St., Ithaca, NY**
**274-5488 www.tompkins-co.org/cofa**
Call to schedule a free home safety assessment.

## 2. Home Modification Resources

**Finding a Private Contractor** *Certified Aging-In-Place Specialists (CAPS) are professionals who guide consumers in modifying their homes to age in place. They include contractors and occupational therapists who complete courses, pass exams, participate in continuing education and adhere to a code of ethics.*

Below is a list of individuals within 25 miles of Ithaca who have received CAPS certification as of November, 2011. For an updated list, go online to **www.nahb.com** and search the "Directory of Professionals with Home Building Designations."

| Name | Company | Phone |
|---|---|---|
| Dean Shea | Sunny Brook Builders of Enfield | 539-6286 |
| Mark Barber | Sunny Brook Builders | 539-6286 |
| Raymond Brehm | Sunny Brook Builders | 539-6286 |
| Steven Nash | Upscale Remodeling Group | 539-6014 |
| Ron Ronsvalle | Perfect Painters/Heritage Builders | 277-6260 |
| Esther Greenhouse | Cayuga Country Homes | 844-4316 |
| Cheryl Petrulis | Cayuga Country Homes | 844-4316 |
| John Lafian | Crown Construction | 844-3993 |
| Kevin McMahon | KJM Contracting | 749-2550 |

The CAPS designation is not to be construed as a guarantee of the quality of the designation-holder's work. Not

all contractors will work on smaller projects. Brochures (produced by the NYS Attorney General's office) containing tips on selecting a contractor can be obtained at Tompkins County Office for the Aging or go online to **www.ag.ny.gov/publications/Contractor_Tip_Card_web.pdf.** The agencies listed in the next section, which offer assistance to low-income households, may also have lists of contractors who do particular types of home modifications (e.g., installing ramps, chairlifts, accessibility modifications) and whose insurance and references have been checked.

## Help for Low-Income Households

**Tompkins County Office for the Aging (COFA)**
**214 W. Martin Luther King Jr./State St.**
**Ithaca, NY 14850**
**274-5486** **www.tompkins-co.org/cofa**
The Office for the Aging assists income-eligible seniors (60+) in identifying and applying for funds for home repairs/modifications and weatherization.

**Finger Lakes Independence Center (FLIC)**
**215 Fifth St., Ithaca, NY 14850**
**Voice/TTY 272-2433** **www.fliconline.org**
FLIC offers information & referral for accessible housing, advocacy and other disability issues. Staff can visit your home for consultations, to make suggestions for improving building accessibility and to review architectural plans prior to construction.

**Better Housing for Tompkins County**
**950 Danby Rd., Suite 102, Ithaca, NY 14850**
**273-2187** **www.betterhousingtc.org**
Better Housing offers several programs to income-

eligible households. Their home repair program for senior or disabled homeowners provides small home repairs and modifications, charging only for the materials. They can repair stairs, install handrails, grab bars, comfort-height toilets, walk-in showers, install light switches, do other minor electrical projects, and patch loose flooring (tripping hazards). The *Access to Home Program* provides funding for safety and comfort measures for low-to-moderate income disabled home-owners or those living with a disabled family member. Home accessibility improvements include, but are not limited to:

- Ramps, lifts, handrails, stair glides, doorway access
- Roll-in showers, grab bars and seats
- Easy-to-reach kitchen work and storage areas
- Modifications for the visually and hearing impaired
- Placement of bathroom or bedroom on the first floor
- Special thermostatic and environmental controls

**Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services (INHS)**
**115 W. Clinton St., Ithaca, NY 14850**
**273-2453** **www.ithacanhs.org**

Repair grants and deferred loans are available for people who need important, basic repairs but can't afford to make loan payments, provided they meet income guide-lines. The SHARP (Small Home Repair Program ) is the only program, at this time, which is limited to serving City of Ithaca residents. It is open to persons, who are 62+, disabled, or single head of household. SHARP repairs can include stairs and handrails, grab bars, minor repairs to porches and flooring, sidewalks (tripping hazards), lighting, and light switches.

**Bishop Sheen Ecumenical Housing Foundation**
**935 East Ave., Suite 300, Rochester, NY 14607**
**585-657-4114** **www.sheenhousing.org**
Sheen Housing assists families, seniors, and persons with disabilities who need housing repair assistance to maintain their residences, elevate their quality of life and eliminate threats to their health and safety. Emergency Home Repair grants are subject to family size and household income guidelines. Sheen Housing also provides *Access to Home* grants to fund accessibility modifications for persons with disabilities.

**U.S.D.A. Rural Development**
**1 N. Main St., Cortland NY 13045 753-0851, ext. 4**
**www.rurdev.usda.gov/HAD-R_Loans_Grants.html**
*(Serves several counties in this region including Tompkins)*
Rehabilitation Loans and Grants: the *Very Low Income Housing Repair Program* provides loans and grants to low-income homeowners, age 62+, to repair or improve their dwellings or to remove health and safety hazards.

**Community Faith Partners**
**P.O. Box 4774, Ithaca, NY 14851**
**347-4393 (Jim Crawford) www.communityfaithpartners.org**
Helps widows, older people, single moms and persons with special needs maintain the physical condition of their homes and avoid costly repairs through timely advice, congregation-based assistance, and referral to professionals. When assistance is requested, a designated coordinator visits the site, together with someone from their congregation, to assess the issues. Services are offered two times per year, usually in May and September. Jobs, limited to four to six hours, are done by college students and local volunteers.

## 3. Assistive Equipment

*Be sure to have a professional help you choose equipment that fits you as well as show you how to use it.*

### Equipment Loan

**Finger Lakes Independence Center (FLIC)**
**215 Fifth Street, Ithaca, NY 14850**
**Voice/TTY 272-2433** **www.fliconline.org**
FLIC maintains a loan closet with various adaptive equipment for short-term loans, including wheelchairs, crutches, portable ramps, tub transfer benches and shower chairs. Clients can try out and borrow adaptive devices for vision, hearing, mobility and other impairments. Modular ramping systems are also available for loan that meet all ADA requirements but are meant only for temporary use while waiting for a permanent solution to improve access.

**Trumansburg American Legion**
**4431 Seneca Road, Trumansburg, NY 14886**
**387-4212**
Loan closet with wheelchairs, crutches, canes, walkers and commodes.

**Dryden Veterans' Memorial Home**
**2272 Dryden Rd. (Rt. 13), Dryden, NY 13053**
**844-9900**
Loan closet items include bathroom safety equipment, canes, crutches, wheelchairs and hospital beds.

**Groton American Legion**
**307 Main St., Groton, NY 13073**
**898-3837**
Loan closet items include canes, crutches, wheel chairs, hospital beds and bathroom safety equipment.

## Rentals/Purchasing/Equipment Repair

*Agencies listed below sell assistive equipment related to falls prevention. They may also rent/sell other types of medical equipment and supplies (e.g., respiratory supplies) not mentioned in this listing. Check your insurance to see what might be covered.*

**Empowerment by Design Occupational Therapy**
**P.O. Box 506, Ithaca, NY 14850**
**351-1654** **www.ebd-ot.com**

Rents: modular ramps
Sells: modular ramps, grab bars, transfer systems and lifts. Specializes in custom adaptive equipment.

**Franciscan Health Support**
**1301A Trumansburg Rd., Ithaca, NY 14850**
**277-1827** **www.franciscan-services.com**

Rents: wheelchairs
Sells: walkers

**Gerould's Healthcare Center**
**200 South Main St., Elmira, NY 14904**
**607-734-7220** **www.geroulds.com**

Sells and rents: power wheelchairs, lift chairs and scooters
Sells: shower chairs and benches, stair lifts

**Guthrie—Med Supply Depot**
**Clockworks Plaza, Third St., Ithaca, NY 14850**
**273-4727 or 1-877-815-2627** **www.guthrie.org**

Rents: power chairs, wheelchairs, transport chairs
Sells: all of the above plus commodes, canes, crutches, walkers, shower chairs, benches

**Homecare Medical Supply**
**337 W. Genesee St., Auburn, NY 13021**
**315-255-3110**
Rents: commodes, walkers, lift chairs, and manual wheelchairs
Sells: all of the above plus power wheelchairs

**Kinney Drugs (at downtown Ithaca location)**
**513 N. Cayuga St., Ithaca, NY 14850**
**272-8333**
Sells: wheelchairs and transport wheelchairs, commodes, canes, crutches, walkers

**Lincare**
**1301 B Trumansburg Rd., Ithaca, NY 14850**
**277-4027**
Rents: hospital beds, wheelchairs.
Sells: walkers

**Maximum Mobility**
**129 North Avenue, Owego, NY 13827**
**687-6205 or 1-888-372-7222**
Rents: manual wheelchairs
Sells: power and manual wheelchairs, scooters, stair glides, ramps, power seat lift chairs

**Professional Home Care**
**Ithaca Shopping Plaza, 322 Elmira Rd, Ste 4,**
**Ithaca, NY 14850 257-1425**
Rents: wheelchairs and hospital beds
Sells: lift chairs

**Sam Peters**
**1803 Danby Rd., Ithaca, NY 14850**
**272-8811**
Sells: lift chairs

## Locating Other Assistive Devices/Products

**AbleData** **www.abledata.com**
AbleData is a helpful government-funded, on-line directory providing objective information about assistive technology products and rehabilitation equipment. Visit the website and click on "products."

**University of Buffalo** **www.agingresearch.buffalo.edu/**
The Aging and Technology Research Center at the University of Buffalo has photos and names of many products for all areas of the house which may prevent falls. When you get to its website, click on "Home Safety Assessment Tool" in the menu, and then click on "Assistive Devices and Products to Prevent Falls."

## Personal Emergency Response System

**Tompkins County Office for the Aging**
**214 W. Martin Luther King Jr./State St., Ithaca, NY**
**274-5482** **www.tompkins-co.org/cofa**
The Personal Emergency Response System (PERS) is a communication alert which links an individual with Tompkins County's emergency response system. The button is on the unit or on a pendant worn around the neck (or on a bracelet). When pressed, it automatically dials an Emergency rescue dispatcher. PERS units are rented on a sliding scale depending upon income.

## 4. Check for Safety: A Home Fall Prevention Checklist for Older Adults

*The following checklist and recommendations were produced by the CDC (U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention)*: **www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Falls/adultfalls.html.**

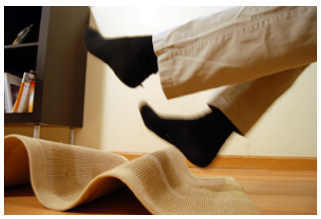
### Falls at Home

Falls are often due to hazards that are often overlooked but easy to fix. This checklist will help you find and fix those hazards in your home.

The checklist asks about hazards found in each room of your home and tells you how to fix the problems. At the end of the checklist, you'll find other tips for preventing falls.

➔ **FLOORS: Look at the floor in each room.**

- ❑ Ask someone to move the furniture so your path is clear.
- ❑ Remove the rugs or use double-sided tape or a non-slip backing so the rugs won't slip.



- ❑ Pick up items that are on the floor.
- ❑ Coil or tape cords and wires next to the wall so you can't trip over them. If needed, have an electrician put in another outlet.

➔ **STAIRS AND STEPS: Look at the stairs you use both inside and outside your home.**

- ❑ Pick up items on the stairs. Always keep objects off the stairs.
- ❑ Fix loose or uneven steps.
- ❑ Have an electrician put in an overhead light at the top and bottom of the stairs.
- ❑ Have an electrician put in a light switch at the top and bottom of the stairs if this has not been done. You can get light switches that glow.
- ❑ Have a friend or family member change any burned-out bulbs.
- ❑ Make sure the carpet is firmly attached to every step, or remove the carpet and attach non-slip rubber treads to the stairs.
- ❑ Fix loose handrails or put in new ones. Make sure handrails are on both sides of the stairs and are as long as the stairs.

➔ **KITCHEN: Look at your kitchen eating area.**

- ❑ Move items in your cabinets. Keep things you use often on the lower shelves (about waist level).
- ❑ If you must use a step stool, get one with a bar to hold on to. Never use a chair as a step stool.

➔ **BATHROOMS: Look at your bathrooms.**

- ❑ Put a non–slip rubber mat or self–stick strips on the floor of the tub or shower.

- ❑ Have a carpenter put grab bars inside the tub and next to the toilet.

➔ **BEDROOMS: Look at your bedrooms.**

- ❑ Place a lamp close to the bed where it's easy to reach.

- ❑ Put in a night–light so you can see where you're walking. Some night–lights go on by themselves after dark.

## Other Things You Can Do to Prevent Falls

**Do physical activity regularly**. This makes you stronger and improves your balance and coordination.

**Have your doctor or pharmacist look at all your medications,** even over-the-counter medicines. Some medicines can make you sleepy or dizzy.

**Have your vision checked at least once a year** by an eye doctor. Poor vision can increase your risk of falling.

**Get up slowly** after you sit or lie down.

**Wear shoes both inside and outside the house**. Avoid going barefoot or wearing slippers.

**Improve the lighting in your home**. Put in brighter light bulbs. Fluorescent bulbs are bright and cost less to use.

**It's safest to have uniform lighting in a room.** Add lighting to dark areas. Hang lightweight curtains or shades to reduce glare.

**Paint a contrasting color on the top edge of all steps** so that you can see the stairs better. For example, use a light color paint on dark wood.

## Other Safety Tips

- Keep emergency numbers in large print near each phone.
- Put a phone near the floor in case you fall and can't get up.
- Think about wearing an alarm device that will bring help in case you fall and can't get up.
- Look out for pets who may get underfoot or are resting on floors or stairs.

# Appendix A

# Medical Screening and Assessment

*The material on the following two pages come from the 2010 American Geriatric Society Clinical Practice guideline found at* **www.americangeriatrics.org/health_care_professionals/clinical_practice/clinical_guidelines_recommendations/2010.**

The American Geriatrics Society has issued the following recommendations for screening and assessment by doctors and physical therapists for prevention of falls in older persons:

1. Each person should be asked whether he/she has fallen (in the past year) and, if so, about the frequency and circumstances of the fall(s). They should also be asked if they experience any difficulties with walking or balance.
2. Anyone who has had a fall should be evaluated for gait and balance.
3. Anyone who has problems on standard gait and balance tests should be given a comprehensive assessment.

---

## Comprehensive Fall Risk Assessment

If you are curious about what a comprehensive assessment should include, on the next page are recommendations the American Geriatrics Society makes to physicians (and physical therapists). Some of the terminology is unfamiliar to most of us, but this information will give you an idea of what might be covered.

## Focused History

a) History of falls: circumstances of the fall(s), frequency, symptoms at time of fall, injuries, other consequences
b) Medication review: All prescribed and over-the-counter medications with dosages
c) History of relevant risk factors: acute or chronic medical problems (e.g., osteoporosis, urinary incontinence, cardiovascular disease)

## Physical Examination

a) Detailed assessment of gait, balance, and mobility levels and lower extremity joint function
b) Neurological function: cognitive evaluation, lower extremity peripheral nerves, proprioception, reflexes
c) Muscle strength (lower extremities)
d) Cardiovascular status: heart rate and rhythm, postural pulse, blood pressure
e) Assessment of visual acuity
f) Examination of the feet and footwear

## Functional Assessment

a) Assessment of activities of daily living (ADL) skills including use of adaptive equipment as appropriate
b) Assessment of the individual's perceived functional ability and fear related to falling (i.e., is individual curtailing involvement in activities he/she is safely able to perform due to fear of falling?)

## Environmental Assessment

a) This assessment includes home safety.

**We thank** the members of the Tompkins County *Step Up to Stop Falls* Coalition for their contribution to this booklet. Key partner organizations include:

- Community Health & Home Care
- Finger Lakes Independence Center
- Health Planning Council of the Human Services Coalition of Tompkins County
- Lifelong
- Tompkins County Dept. of Emergency Response
- Tompkins County Office for the Aging

*This **Falls Prevention Resource Guide*** is also available online at www.tompkins-co.org/cofa

**Other resource guides** available from the Tompkins County Office for the Aging or on its website:

Housing for Seniors in Tompkins County
Long Term Support Services in Tompkins County
Resources for Caregivers in Tompkins County
Recreation and Education for Older Adults
Careers in Caring in Tompkins County