

Information about Falls

Online version with active resource links at: <http://cancer-help.me/falls>

Falls

Regardless of age, falls are a common problem among people with cancer. People with cancer who fall are often more at risk of serious injury or even death because of bone weakness or low platelets.

Fall risk is particularly high for older patients and patients that are hospitalized. Always be sure to let your care team including your physician know about any falls, even those without injury.

Some reasons for increased risk of falls with people who have cancer are:

- Certain medications or taking multiple medications at the same time
- Medications that cause frequent nighttime awakenings for trips to the bathroom
- Bone involvement of the cancer
- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Dehydration
- Low blood counts
- Urinary or bowel changes
- Numbness in the feet from chemotherapy

What Your Health Care Provider May Recommend:

- If you notice changes or problems with weakness, balance, numbness, or confusion, let your care team know, ask for help.
- When you need to get up, sit on the side of the bed or chair for a minute first.
- If you fall, let your cancer team and your caregivers know.
- If you have trouble walking, ask about a home health nursing visit for an in-home safety evaluation.
- If you feel you may fall, the use of durable medical equipment such as a cane or a walker can be fall preventative.
- If a walker or wheelchair is recommended, keep it by the bed or next to where you sit. Use it every time you get up, even for short trips.
- Exercises to improve your strength and balance. Ask your care team for specific exercises or a referral to a physical therapist.
- Get your vision checked by an eye doctor
- Look at your footwear to see if any of your shoes might increase your risk of falling. You may be referred to a podiatrist (foot doctor).

Making your home a safer environment:

- Increase lighting throughout the house, especially at the top and bottom of stairs.
- Ensure that lighting is readily available when getting up in the middle of the night.
- Make sure there are two secure rails on all stairs and use them (Set up a bed to reduce your use of stairs if possible)
- Install grab bars in the tub/shower and near the toilet. Use bath mats or non-slip stickers in the tub/shower.
- Consider using a shower chair and hand-held shower.
- Remove all loose rugs from your home and/or tape the edges of rugs to the floor.
- Avoid wearing slippery shoes.
- Make sure walking spaces are clutter free.
- Tape down any electrical cords that may be tripping hazards.
- Caregivers can play an important role in preventing and/or managing falls. For guidance on falls for caregivers, please see the link below.

Adapted from: <https://www.seattlecca.org/during-your-care/fall-prevention> and <https://www.ncoa.org/healthy-aging/falls-prevention/preventing-falls-tips-for-older-adults-and-caregivers/6-steps-to-protect-your-older-loved-one-from-a-fall/> and <https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/fall-risk-assessment/>

Resources for Additional Information:

- [American Cancer Society, Balance Problems and Falls](#)
- [Cancer.Net, How to Stay Safe and Independent During Cancer Treatment](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control, Older Adult Fall Prevention](#)
- [NIH, National Cancer Institute, Persistent Peripheral Neuropathy Increases Fall Risk among Cancer Survivors](#)
- [Chemocare, Weakness](#)

Recursos en Español:

- [NIH, Instituto Nacional Del Cáncer, Neuropatía periférica persistente aumenta el riesgo de caídas en supervivientes de cáncer](#)
- [Chemocare, Debilidad](#)