

General Health Guidelines:

- Follow your medical provider's directions regarding exercise, which is important; Particularly balance exercises.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist to review your prescriptions and over-the-counter medications.
- Have your eyes checked by an eye doctor at least once a year.
- Wear appropriate footwear when walking inside and outside your home.
- Reduce tripping hazards. Remove clutter, scatter rugs, extension cords and other trip hazard items. Add grab bars and railings, if needed.
- Take the recommended dose of Vitamin D (800 IU daily) unless otherwise directed.
- Get screened and, if needed, treated for osteoporosis.
- Use a walking stick or other device to help you keep your balance.

Green Flags — All Clear

If you have:

- No falls and are not afraid of falling
- Regularly exercise per primary care doctor instructions
- Feel steady on your feet when walking
- Use any assistive devices as recommended by your doctor or PT.
- Environment free of trip hazards.

What this means...

- Good work!

Keep up the great work!

Yellow Flags — Caution

If you have any of the following:

- Problems taking your medications as prescribed by your medical provider (e.g., you miss or skip doses, have difficulty understanding directions, or take medications that cause dizziness, fatigue or weakness)
- Lightheadedness when you stand up
- Reduced muscle strength in legs
- Painful or unstable ankles, knees, or hips
- Decreased sensation in your legs or feet
- Blurred vision
- Clutter and trip hazards in your home
- History of falls of any type
- Diagnosis of osteoporosis
- Difficulty walking
- Balance problems when walking
- Unable to get up from the floor without help

What this means...

- You are at a higher risk for falls.
- Your medication may need to be adjusted
- You may need to take Vitamin D
- You may need an eye exam
- You may need a physical therapist
- You may benefit from a home safety evaluation

Call your doctor, consulting nurse, or healthcare provider if symptoms do not improve.

Name:

Number:

Instructions:

If you notice a Yellow Flag, work closely with your health care team.

Red Flags—Stop and Think

If you have:

- Extreme dizziness or loss of consciousness
- Had a fall and have difficulty standing, moving a limb, or cannot weight bear
- Had a fall and have trouble thinking clearly or staying awake
- Head injury or trauma from a fall

What this means...

You need to be evaluated by a healthcare professional immediately

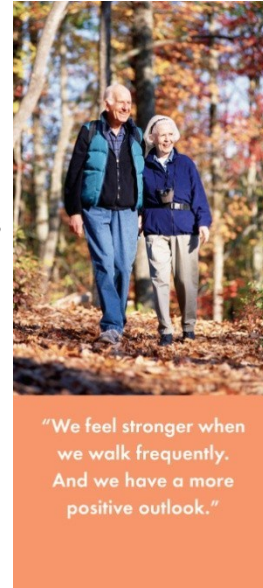
Name:

Number:

Follow these instructions: **CALL 9-1-1**

If you notice a Red Flag, call 911. Emergency!

- A fall is defined as unintentionally coming to rest on the ground, floor, or other lower level from a standing, sitting, or horizontal position in a movement **not** caused by a seizure, stroke, fainting, motor vehicle accident, or risky behavior, such as skiing, roof repair, or drug overdose.
- Each year, one if every three adults age 64 or older has a fall. Falls can cause moderate to severe injuries, such as hip fractures and head injuries and can increase the risk of early death.
- Twenty to thirty percent of people who fall suffer moderate to severe injuries, such as lacerations, hip fractures, or head traumas.
- Falls are the most common cause of traumatic brain injuries. Most fractures among older people are caused by falls. The most common are fractures of the spine, hip, forearm, leg, ankle, pelvis, upper arm, and hand.
- Many people who fall, even if they are not injured, develop a fear of falling. This fear may limit their activities, which leads to reduced mobility and loss of physical fitness and in turn increases the risk of falling.
- There are three common areas to assess when looking at preventing falls in the elderly:
 - 1. Environmental:** Risk factors include trip hazards; loose carpet or throw rugs, extension cords, ill-fitting or inappropriately soled footwear, poor lighting, excessive bed height or inappropriate seating, lack of grab bars in bathrooms, poorly fitting or incorrect eyewear, wet or slippery floors or ground, and pets. External hazards can include uneven walking surfaces, cracks and abrupt edges in sidewalks and driveways, an icy or slippery sidewalk; e.g., leaves from trees on sidewalks and walkways.
 - 2. Behavioral:** Risk factors include lack of exercise or sometimes over exertion, not getting proper rest, drinking alcohol, and poor dietary intake.
 - 3. Medical:** Risk factors include having a medical illness, including Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, Depression, Diabetes, Osteoporosis, and Arthritis. For example, Osteoporosis, a disease that involves a weakening of bone density can cause the bones to break even with slight pressure. Arthritis causes pain and stiffness making it difficult to grip or hold on to a cane or walking device and often a loss of balance when first getting up from a sitting or lying position. Infections, urinary incontinence, impaired mental capacity, confusion, foot problems, taking certain medications or when a reaction occurs when changing prescriptions, problems that occur with adverse affects of combination of drugs, and other conditions caused by medications or health care treatments.



Many falls can be prevented. By making some changes, you can lower your chances of falling.

Four things **YOU** can do to prevent falls:

- 1** Begin a regular exercise program
- 2** Have your health care provider review your medicines
- 3** Have your vision checked
- 4** Make your home safer

Southeast Washington Aging and Long Term Care

At Aging and Long Term Care, we believe every adult deserves to live with dignity. We connect seniors, adults with disabilities and family caregivers to a full range of free and other community resources designed to offer you choice, improve your quality of life and respect your independence.

For more information, call Information and Assistance

Upper Valley Yakima County: 509-469-0500 **Lower Valley Yakima County (Grandview):** 509-402-0334

Benton County: 509-735-0315 **Franklin County:** 509-412-1013

Kittitas County: 509-925-8765 **Walla Walla County:** 509-529-6470

Columbia County: 509-382-4787 **Garfield County:** 509-843-3563

Asotin County: 509-758-2355