

Senior Advice: Avoid bad breaks with planning, exercise

by *Doug_Mayberry*

Q: As I am now in my 70s, I am greatly concerned about the possibility of my falling and breaking something. It's my major fear.

I occasionally slip, but I have been lucky and picked myself up unhurt. Are there some simple guidelines to prepare myself?

A: Yes, you need to pursue all the preventive options available because the results can affect your life greatly.

The really big secret to longevity is action, action, action. Don't sit watching the soaps or reading too long. By keeping your body active and mind clear, you have a better chance of not falling.

Maintain a "must do" exercise program and watch your weight. Strengthen your ankle muscles by sitting in a chair and holding one leg at a time straight out, and then pull one foot back toward your body as far as you can. Hold the position for 20 seconds. Next, do the other foot. Repeat these movements 10 times.

In the event of a fall, some experts recommend you try not to tense up and not grab something to keep yourself from falling, which is the natural thing to do. Tense muscles put the force of our fall on your hips and elbows. Protect your head by bringing both hands to your head and tucking in your chin. Bend your knees as much as possible. Practicing this technique could be helpful.

Another strengthening option is to sit in a chair and stick your legs straight out. Begin by bringing one leg up and drawing it toward your body as much as possible. Do each leg 10 times and then switch to your other leg to repeat the exercise. Next, using the same method, simply rotate each leg separately both clockwise and counter-clockwise as many times as you can.

Help is available. Other techniques are taught at many senior centers and some hospitals and colleges. By learning to anticipate, to accident-proof your home with plenty of night lights, not using scatter rugs or waxing floors, and using your bed and other furniture to support you when you move are good choices. Activated electronic necklaces can be obtained if you are concerned with your inability to make an emergency call, if need be. They are a little pricey, but could be a wise investment.

Make sure you have let your doctor know you have taken a few tumbles. Doctors have the experience to alert

you of what you need to do before it happens again.

Q: I am a person who tries to be prompt. My family taught me to do so, and I feel a lot of stress when I am late. I depend on a good friend and public transportation. Sometimes I do arrive late because of the scheduling.

Can you help?

A: Try to relax and enjoy the ride. The availability of cell phones has changed many routines. Many busy young families simply over-schedule themselves by necessity. If a cell phone is available it is not necessary to make advance plans. Phones also make supermarket shopping easy without a list! Let the person making appointments know you cannot always control your arrival. No doubt they will be cooperative.

Choose the early bird mental attitude. Schedule yourself 15 or 20 minutes ahead of your appointment. Ask your friend to pick you up early. Frequently, as we all experience, we have to wait. Relax and make use of your extra time by carrying a notebook, letter-writing materials, a book, or your unread magazine. Implementing these techniques should help alleviate your concerns.

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