



# DHA Research and Engineering Vision Center of Excellence

## Fall Prevention Considerations for People with Blindness or Low Vision

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that one-third of adults over the age of 65 fall each year. People with vision loss are nearly twice as likely to experience multiple falls than those with typical vision. Therefore, people with vision loss have an increased risk for injury.



Photo by: CDC/ Vision Health Initiative (VHI)

### Medical Care:

To ensure proper medical treatment for current or emerging health conditions:

- Receive an annual dilated eye exam
- Receive an annual audiology exam
- Request a fall risk assessment from your doctor
- Maintain medication compliance and routines
- Consider having a podiatrist assessment as necessary and wear stable footwear as appropriate
- Consult a vision rehabilitation therapist

### In-Home Considerations:

- **Seek Training:** Vision rehabilitation therapists teach a range of adaptations and modifications within the home for those experiencing vision loss.
- **Declutter:** Everyone has different systems for maintaining their home; however, an organized space is imperative for ensuring you know where things are or should be at all times.
- **Organization:** Developing organizational skills is important for all areas within the home for people with low vision or blindness. Everything should have a specific place and always be put back in that spot. This reduces trip hazards or other fall risks by not having items in the walkway.

- **Reduce Frequent Furniture Movement:** The person with vision loss should be consulted regarding any movement of furniture to ensure that furniture does not become a fall hazard.
- **Reduce Trip Hazards:** Where possible, reduce unnecessary rugs, mats, cords, or related trip hazards.
- **Minimize Climbing:** Reduce or eliminate storage that involves avoidable climbing, such as in taller cabinets.
- **Lighting:** Consider both overhead and task lighting as appropriate to meet your visual needs. Good lighting is especially helpful around stairs in both indoor and outdoor environments to reduce glare or shadows. Often, light that resembles natural light is beneficial.
- **Contrast:** Use a dark rug at an entry door on a light-colored tile floor; use a colored tablecloth that contrasts with a wall color; or put a dark-colored placemat under a plate at the table to increase visibility of the plate.
- **Labeling:** Use a labeling system to identify items in the home such as medication, personal care items, appliances, etc. A labeling system can assist in medication routines to prevent medication mix-ups that can cause dizziness or other fall risks. These labels can be large print, braille, or high-contrast to allow for quick identification. Systems are personalized; however, it is important to not over label.

### **Outdoor Considerations:**

- Request an Orientation and Mobility evaluation and training in use of a white or support cane, as necessary
- Reduce outdoor trip hazards such as hoses or other outdoor equipment
- Increase lighting on paths, driveways, and stairwells
- Reduce gravel or loose material from walkways, where possible
- Remain physically active as much as possible to maintain health and flexibility

### **For More Information:**

National Council on Aging (NCOA): State Fall Prevention Coalitions

<https://www.ncoa.org/article/how-to-contact-your-states-falls-prevention-coalition>

Home Hazard Removal Program (HARP): An Evidence-Based Program Created from the Older Americans Act

<https://www.ncoa.org/article/home-hazard-removal-program-harp-an-evidence-based-program-created-from-the-older-americans-act>

Protect Your Independence: Create a Fall Prevention Plan

<https://visionaware.org/blog/visually-impaired-now-what/protect-your-independence-create-a-fall-prevention-plan/>

Falls Prevention Tools for Veterans and Caregivers - VHA National Center for Patient Safety

<https://patientsafety.va.gov/veterans/falls.asp>

Website: <https://vce.health.mil>

Email us: [dha.ncr.dod-va.mbx.vcsc@mail.mil](mailto:dha.ncr.dod-va.mbx.vcsc@mail.mil)

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