

Additional Fall Prevention Considerations During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the lives of every segment of our society and has presented unprecedented challenges to seniors, who appear to be the most vulnerable for developing serious complications from COVID-19 illness. According to Dr. Steven Gambert, Professor of Medicine and Director of Geriatrics at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, “Families and seniors should be alert to an atypical presentation of COVID-19. A fall or forgetfulness, for example, might be signs of an infection, even if other, more common symptoms aren’t in evidence.”

Hence, it is imperative that seniors be aware of how to protect themselves from the COVID-19 virus. Information can be found at [CDC Covid-19 Guidance for Older Adults](#). Isolation in homes and confinement to rooms in facilities makes fall prevention even more important. Hence, now is a good time to review the [STEADI](#) fall prevention initiative and tailor a plan to your environment relative to COVID-19 precautions. Considerations when developing a fall prevention plan during the COVID-19 outbreak include:

- As seniors spend more time in a limited space, there is the potential for clutter to accumulate. Clutter and other tripping hazards must be addressed promptly.
 - Always maintain a neat and orderly living area free from items left on the floor.
- Seniors may receive an increased number of packages shipped to their home during this period.
 - To maintain balance while retrieving packages delivered to your doorstep, place a table or sturdy box outside the door for placement of deliveries to avoid bending over to pick up items.
 - Do not allow boxes, envelopes, or packing materials to remain on the floor where they can become a tripping hazard. Packaging should be immediately discarded.
- Maintain a routine.
 - Do not change bedtime/sleeping schedules.
 - Start each day as you did prior to the COVID-19 outbreak. Get dressed and out of bed every morning.
 - Wear properly fitting shoes, not slippers, during the day.
 - When removing glasses and hearing aids before resting or sleeping, store them in a consistent location to avoid misplacement. Do the same for cell phones for quick and easy access.
- When wearing a mask, position it for a proper fit so that the mask does not occlude your vision or cause a distraction while walking.
 - Apply the mask and make necessary adjustments prior to leaving your home.
 - When possible, use online grocery and other services to avoid leaving home and, thus, the need to wear a mask.
- While group exercise classes are canceled to maintain social distancing, it is still important to stay active to maintain muscle tone.
 - Complete gentle exercises indoors, such as those found at [Go4Life](#), or take walks outdoors.
 - Maintain an exercise log to monitor your activities.
 - Wear appropriate footwear indoors and outdoors to decrease the risk of falling on slippery surfaces.
- Maintain mental health, as symptoms of depression are linked to an increased incidence of falls.
 - Stay in touch with family, friends, and community groups by telephone, text, and/or email. Establish regular, scheduled contacts and continue to participate in important social events such as religious services, book clubs, etc., virtually. If setting up an online account is overwhelming, ask a family member or friend to help by providing guidance over the phone.
 - Access credible online mental health information:
 - [SAMHSA Taking Care of Your Behavioral Health](#)
 - [CDC Coronavirus Managing Stress and Anxiety](#)