

Keeping your health and well-being in the know

MyHealthTALK

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Courtesy of Asset Health

Preventing Serious Falls and Slip-Ups

Each year, one in three adults age 65 and older falls according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Falls are the leading cause of death from injury in the same group. According to The National Safety Council, most fatal falls occur at home.

The reason seniors fall is due to many factors. Sometimes they are so afraid of falling that they reduce activities and soon become unsteady causing falls. Other causes may be related to balance and muscle strength. Vision problems can also be related to the cause of falls.

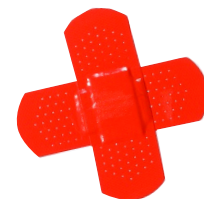
With most falls happening at home, the easiest steps to prevent falls are to eliminate clutter, tape down or remove throw rugs, tape down electrical cords, increase lighting, check the mattress height and have chairs with arms. Emergency alert buttons can help too since they are easily accessible in case of a fall. Since most home falls for seniors occur in the bathroom, making the bathroom safer will help. This includes adding grab bars by the toilet, installing grab bars in the shower; and adding a slip-free surface, a shower chair plus a handheld shower head.

In addition to making your home safer, chances of falling can be reduced by:

- Having your doctor review the medicines you take
- Getting your vision checked
- Starting a regular exercise routine such as tai chi

Source: *The Costco Connection/January 2011*

FAMILY SAFETY



Keeping your family safe and sound is very important, so always be prepared for the unexpected.

In Your House

Accidents or mishaps can occur in your home or in your car so be prepared. Always keep a well-stocked first aid kit in your home and an emergency car-kit in your car. You can purchase pre-stocked kits at a drugstore or online. You can also easily make your own emergency kits.

The first item you will need is a box to keep everything organized. You can buy a tackle box or artist's box with sections. You will next need to assemble some basic items to stock your home first-aid kit.

You will need to replace items that expire on a regular basis. You will also want to re-stock opened or partially used items before you run out. Mark your calendar to assure that you do this timely. Most importantly, store the kit where it is easily accessible to adults in your home.

In Your Car

A **car emergency kit** is essential as well. You will have some larger items to include so may want to use a plastic storage bin or a large backpack that you can store in your trunk. While most of us have cell phones and a roadside-assistance card, we are not otherwise prepared for an emergency.

You will want to change items seasonally as well as check for expiration dates on items like batteries and fire extinguishers.

Home Emergency Kit

- Card with contact information for your physician and other emergency numbers such as Poison Control.
- Bandages in a variety of sizes
- Gauze
- Adhesive tape
- Antiseptic wipes
- Antibiotic ointment
- Hydrogen Peroxide
- Ace Bandage
- Hydrocortisone cream (1%)
- Tweezers
- Scissors
- Disposable instant cold packs
- Plastic non-latex gloves
- Flashlight and extra batteries

Car Emergency Kit

- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Blanket
- Jumper Cables
- Bottled water
- Small first aid kit
- Flares
- Fire extinguisher (5-pound, A-B-C type)
- Shovel (for snow or mud)
- Tire repair kit and pump

Tobacco Cessation



Smoking is the leading cause of preventable deaths in the United States. Smoking is responsible for about 87% of lung cancer deaths and is linked to cancers of the mouth, throat, larynx, esophagus, pancreas, cervix, kidney, colon and bladder. Quitting smoking will lower your chances of having a heart attack, stroke and if you are pregnant it will improve your chances of having a healthy baby. Quitting smoking is the single most important step a smoker can do to improve the length and quality of his or her life, not to mention it will save money and aggravation, since more and more cities and states are banning smoking in public places. Quitting smoking is said to be one of the most difficult things a person can undertake, however with planning and lots of will power you can quit.

Here are some tips to help you quit.

1. **Set a Date** - Give yourself a couple of weeks to prepare, but not enough time to lose your motivation. You could think about a special day such as your birthday, anniversary, or the Great American Smokeout Day which is on Nov. 17th 2011. If you smoke at work, quit on a weekend to give yourself a couple of days to be smoke free before returning to work.
2. **Share your Plans** - Let other people know you are quitting, it is easier to quit if you have the support of others around you. Support groups are also available to give you someone to talk to and help keep you on track.
3. **Talk to your Doctor** - There are medications that the doctor can prescribe to help you quit. There are also over the counter Nicotine Replacement therapies such as Nicotine gum and the Nicotine patch for which you do not need a prescription. There is also the option to quit cold turkey. Your doctor can help you figure out the best option.

4. **Change your Habits** – Smoking can be associated with many of your daily habits. You may need to change some of those habits to help you quit. Avoid activities that you associate with smoking. Stay away from smokers, go places where smoking is not allowed and you will not be tempted to smoke.

5. **Remember the Rewards** - You will instantly get rewards from quitting smoking, in the first 20 minutes after quitting your heart rate and blood pressure returns to normal and after 12 hours your carbon monoxide level in your blood drops to normal. After 1 year your risk of having coronary artery disease is half that of a smoker's, and after 10 years your risk of dying from lung cancer decreases by almost 50 percent and the risk of getting other cancers also decreases.
6. If you slip up, don't get discouraged. It takes people an average of six attempts to quit for good and your chances of stopping successfully actually go up the more times you try.

References: American Cancer Society, American Lung Association and the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services

Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids

The path to smoking addiction starts at very young ages.

Lifetime smoking and other tobacco use often begins by the time kids graduate from high school. Young kids' naive experimentation frequently develops into regular smoking, which typically turns into a strong addiction – well before the age of 18 – that can overpower the most well-intentioned efforts to quit.

Some factors associated with youth tobacco use include:

- Low socioeconomic status
- Use and approval of tobacco use by peers or siblings
- Lack of skills to resist influences to tobacco use
- Smoking by parents or guardians and/or lack of parental support or involvement
- Accessibility, availability, and price of tobacco products
- A perception that tobacco use is the norm
- Low levels of academic achievement
- Low self-image or self-esteem
- Aggressive behavior (e.g., fighting, carrying weapons)

Tobacco use during adolescence is associated with the following health risk behaviors:

- High-risk sexual behavior
- Use of alcohol
- Use of other drugs

Parents as Anti-Smoking Role Models (Whether They Smoke or Not)

- If you don't smoke, don't start! If you do smoke quit! Research shows that children who have a parent who smokes are more likely to smoke and to be heavier smokers at young ages.
- If you smoke, share your struggles to quit with your children. Kids greatly underestimate how difficult it is to quit smoking. Showing how hard it is to quit can help eliminate this misperception.
- Maintain a smoke-free home. A smoke-free home makes children less likely to smoke, even if their parents smoke.
- Tell your kids that you don't want them to smoke and will be disappointed if they do. Parental attitudes, opinions, and feelings about their kids' smoking status greatly influence whether or not kids will smoke, even when the parents smoke.

References: cdc.gov and www.tobaccofreekids.org