

Drive
SAFE

Work
SAFE

Live
SAFE

PREVENTING FALLS: SUPPORTING BEHAVIOR CHANGES

- There are a number of steps older adults can take to prevent falls:
 - reviewing medications with their doctor
 - having vision and hearing tested often
 - engaging in regular physical activity, after talking with their doctor about an exercise program that is right for them
 - using assistive devices such as a cane, walking stick or walker to help them feel steadier when they walk
 - wearing rubber-soled, low-heeled shoes that fully support their feet, and
 - modifying their homes, to name a few.
- However, older adults may be resistant to making changes, and may not even want to talk about age-related issues initially. If you have concerns about a friend or family member, you will need to be alert to a number of issues:
 - Open communication is critical, but may be difficult. Most adults fear losing their independence and may not want to acknowledge the need to make adaptations or change their behavior. Family members also may be uncomfortable discussing issues that signal a change in an older relative's role or health status, and thus miss opportunities for discussion.
 - Don't jump the gun. Take the time to understand the issues your relative is facing and the needs that result. Listen and ask questions in a caring and respectful way.
 - Remember that your older relative has the right to make their own decisions, including taking risks (as long as they are mentally capable and no one is being endangered.) Anxious and concerned family members, however well meaning, do not have the right to control another or dictate solutions. Be clear within yourself that you are focused on your relative's needs and not your own.
 - Use "I" statements that express specific concerns and emphasize your own feelings ("Mom, I'm worried that it's hard for you to climb the stairs"). Avoid judgmental statements ("Mom, you're getting so weak and out of shape").
 - Ask questions that help your relative explore options and evaluate the decisions they're making ("If that plan doesn't work, what else could you do?").
 - Providing information and resources that will help in maintaining independence is one of the most valuable roles you can play.
 - Assess who your relative will be most likely to listen to. Involve a physician or physical therapist in discussions about assistive devices, proper footwear, etc.

Acknowledgments:

National Institute on Aging

[National Alliance for Caregiving](#)



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