

# Stand Up to Falling

## What to Do When You Fall

*Amy Hosier, Family Sciences, and Matthew Carlson, Marriage and Family Therapy*

A fall can happen to anyone. A fall often happens suddenly, and the experience can be startling and upsetting regardless of your age. Adults age 65 years and older are at the greatest risk of falling and jeopardizing health and independence. Many falls can be prevented by making simple changes, but it's good to plan ahead in case you do fall.



### What to Do If You Fall

How you react after a fall can cause more injuries than the fall itself. If you try to get up too quickly or in the wrong position you may make an injury worse. According to the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, if you fall:

- Do not panic.
- Take several breaths to relax.
- Assess the situation and determine if you are hurt.
- If you are hurt, do not attempt to get up. Instead, ask for help or call 911.
- If you're alone, try to find a tolerable position until help arrives.
- Let your doctor know about your fall.

### Make a Plan to Get Help

Falling is distressing. Lying on the floor for any length of time can also lead to additional problems such as dehydration, pressure sores, missed medication, and confusion—at the time of the fall and afterwards. If you live alone, or are alone for long periods of time, you need a plan to get help quickly. Such plans are also reassuring to family and friends so that they know your emergency strategy, how they can help, and what they should do.

- Carry a cordless or mobile phone with pre-programmed numbers or voice activated auto-dialers to 911 or to family.
- Wear a personal emergency medical alert alarm (a wearable device that at the push of a button activates an emergency response service 24 hours/day 365 days/year).
- Install an intercom system.

- Make arrangements with family/neighbors/friends to contact you at certain times each day.
- Leave a spare key with a neighbor or in a secure hiding space outside of your home so that help can enter your house.

### Stand Up to Falling

The good news is that falls are preventable, and many injuries from falls can be avoided. Falls can be a sign of a new medical problem, muscle weakness, balance problems, medication side effects, vision impairments, cluttered environment, or a combination of these and other problems. To help prevent falls:

- Exercise often.
- Have your health care provider review your medications.
- Have your eyes checked once or twice a year.
- Make your home safer.

# Getting Up from a Fall

The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons recommends the following steps for getting up after a fall. If you do not succeed the first time, rest and try again.



1. Roll over naturally, turning your head in the direction of the roll.



2. If you can, crawl to a piece of strong, stable furniture like a chair and pull yourself up. Approach the chair from the front and put both hands on the seat.



3. Slowly, begin to rise. Bend whichever knee is stronger; keep your other knee on the floor.



4. Slowly twist around and sit in the chair.



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## Kentucky's Area Agencies on Aging and Independent Living.

<p>Barren River Area (Allen, Barren, Butler, Edmonson, Hart, Logan, Metcalfe, Monroe, Simpson, Warren)</p> <p>P.O. Box 90005 177 Graham Avenue Bowling Green, KY 42102-9005</p> <p>Telephone: (270) 781-2381 Toll Free Line: 1-800-598-2381</p>	<p>Big Sandy Area (Floyd, Johnson, Magoffin, Martin, Pike)</p> <p>100 Resource Drive Prestonsburg, Kentucky 41653</p> <p>Telephone (606) 886-2374 Toll Free 1-800-737-2723</p>	<p>Bluegrass Area (Anderson, Boyle, Bourbon, Clark, Estill, Fayette, Franklin, Garrard, Harrison, Jessamine, Lincoln, Madison, Mercer, Nicholas, Powell, Scott, Woodford)</p> <p>699 Perimeter Drive Lexington, Kentucky 40517</p> <p>Telephone (859) 269-8021 Toll Free 1-866-665-7921</p>
<p>Buffalo Trace Area (Bracken, Fleming, Lewis, Mason, Robertson)</p> <p>201 Government Street Suite 300 PO Box 460 Maysville, KY 41056</p> <p>Telephone (606) 564-6894</p>	<p>Cumberland Valley Area (Bell, Clay, Harlan, Jackson, Knox, Laurel, Rockcastle, Whitley)</p> <p>P.O. Box 1740, 342 Old Whitley Road London, Kentucky 40743-1740</p> <p>Telephone (606)864-7391</p>	<p>FIVCO Area (Boyd, Carter, Greenup, Elliott, Lawrence)</p> <p>P.O. Box 636 3000 Louisa Street Catlettsburg, Ky. 41129-0636</p> <p>Phone (606) 929-1366 Toll Free (800) 499-5191</p>
<p>Gateway Area (Bath, Menifee, Montgomery, Morgan, Rowan )</p> <p>110 Lake Park Drive Morehead, Kentucky 40351</p> <p>Telephone (606) 780-0090</p>	<p>Green River Area (Davieess, Hancock, Henderson, McLean, Ohio, Union, Webster)</p> <p>3860 U.S. Highway 60 West Owensboro, Kentucky 42302</p> <p>Telephone (270) 926-4433 Toll Free 1-800-928-9093</p>	<p>KIPDA Area (Bullitt, Henry, Jefferson, Oldham, Shelby, Spencer, Trimble)</p> <p>11520 Commonwealth Drive Louisville, Kentucky 40299</p> <p>Telephone (502) 266-6084</p>
<p>Kentucky River Area (Breathitt, Knott, Lee, Leslie, Letcher, Owsley, Perry, Wolfe)</p> <p>917 Perry Park Road Hazard, KY 41701-9545 Phone: (606) 436-3158</p>	<p>Lake Cumberland Area (Adair, Casey, Clinton, Cumberland, Green, McCreary, Pulaski, Russell, Taylor, Wayne)</p> <p>P.O. BOX 1570, 2374 Lakeway Drive Russell Springs, Kentucky 42642</p> <p>Telephone (270) 866-4200 Toll Free 1-800-264-7093</p>	<p>Lincoln Trail Area (Breckinridge, Grayson, Hardin, Larue, Marion, Meade, Nelson, Washington)</p> <p>Lincoln Trail Area Agency on Aging P.O. Box 604 613 College Street Road Elizabethtown, KY 42702-0604</p> <p>Telephone (270) 769-2393 Toll Free Line 1-800-264-0393</p>
<p>Northern Kentucky Area (Boone, Campbell, Carroll, Gallatin, Grant, Kenton, Owen, Pendleton)</p> <p>P.O. Box 668 22 Spiral Drive Florence, Kentucky 41042-1399</p> <p>Telephone (859) 283-1885</p>	<p>Pennyriple Area (Caldwell, Christian, Crittenden, Hopkins, Livingston, Lyon, Muhlenberg, Todd, Trigg)</p> <p>300 Hammond Drive Hopkinsville, Kentucky 42040</p> <p>Telephone (270) 886-9484 Toll Free Line 1-800-928-7233</p>	<p>Purchase Area (Ballard, Calloway, Carlisle, Fulton, Hickman, Graves, Marshall, McCracken)</p> <p>1002 Medical Drive PO Box 588 Mayfield, Kentucky 42066</p> <p>Telephone (270) 247-7171 Toll Free 1-877-352-5183</p>

## Resources

American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons [http://orthoinfo.aaos.org/topic.cfm?topic=A00098&return\\_link=0](http://orthoinfo.aaos.org/topic.cfm?topic=A00098&return_link=0).

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <http://www.cdc.gov/homeandrecreationalafety/falls/adultfalls.html>.

Kentucky Department for Aging and Independent Living (DAIL) (<http://chfs.ky.gov/dail/>) oversees the administration of statewide programs and services on behalf of Kentucky's elders and individuals with disabilities and partners with Kentucky's 15 Area Agencies on Aging and Independent Living (<http://chfs.ky.gov/dail/areaagenciesonaging.htm>). 275 E. Main St., 3E-E, Frankfort, KY 40621, Phone: (502) 564-6930.

## Medical Alert Systems

American Senior Safety Agency Medical Alert System <http://www.seniorsafety.com/?ad=1454&gclid=CKWDj6ru-q4CFYNx4AodnnZswA>, 1-888-360-1450

Guardian Medical Monitoring <http://www.guardianmedicalmonitoring.com/> 1-877-435-7225

Medical Guardian Medical Alert System <http://www.medicalguardian.com/kentucky-medical-alert> 1-800-668-9200

Philips Lifeline Medical Alert System <http://philips.lifelinesystems.com/content/default> 1-800-380-3111

No Falls Kentucky (<http://www.nofalls.org/>) provides information for older adults and families, health care providers, and community members to help promote independence and reduce falls.

## References

American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons (AAOS). Getting up from a fall. Retrieved March 11, 2010, from: [www.orthoinfo.aaos.org/topic.cfm?topic=A00098](http://www.orthoinfo.aaos.org/topic.cfm?topic=A00098).

Australian Government Department of Health and Aging (2010). Don't Fall for It. Falls Can Be Prevented! A Guide to Preventing Falls for Older People. Retrieved February 13, 2012 from <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/phd-pub-injury-dontfall-ent.htm>.

Learn Not to Fall (2009). Retrieved May 16, 2011, from: <http://www.learnnottofall.com/content/what-if-i-fall/learn-to-get-up.jsp>.

Loyola University Health System (2001). Falls. Retrieved on February 12, 2010, from: [www.stritch.luc.edu/depts/injprev/Falls/adult.htm#GettingUp](http://www.stritch.luc.edu/depts/injprev/Falls/adult.htm#GettingUp).

NIH Senior Health (2008). If you Fall. Retrieved on February 12, 2010, from: [www.nihseniorhealth.gov/falls/ifyoufall/01.html](http://www.nihseniorhealth.gov/falls/ifyoufall/01.html).