



Remember: You can live well with osteoporosis!

Mobility and Assistive Devices to Reduce the Risk of Falls and Fractures, Pt. 1

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Fracture Fact:
Falls are the leading cause of injury-related hospital stays among older adults in Canada

Living well with osteoporosis means living each day to the fullest while managing the health risks and challenges that come with it. With the proper education, consultation and planning, it is possible to continue to engage in meaningful activities while managing the possible risks - one of these risks is falls.

Falls are the leading cause of injury-related hospital stays among older adults in Canada. Approximately 30% of those aged 65 years and older fall at least once each year, and those who fall are two to three times more likely to fall again. The good news is that there is strong evidence to show that falls, and the injuries they cause, can be prevented. There are many ways to reduce the risk of a fall, including:

- Changing the environment (e.g., removing slip and trip hazards)
- doing exercises that improve muscle strength and balance. For more information:
 - COPING'S [Boning Up on Exercise Series](#) and
 - [Too Fit to Fracture: Managing Osteoporosis through Exercise](#)
- avoiding medications that increase the risk of falls (e.g., some antidepressants and sleep aids)
- getting regular medical checkups and vision tests to detect and treat conditions that increase the risk of falls (e.g., diabetes or cataracts)
- properly using appropriate mobility aids and assistive devices if these become necessary.



Indoor stairlift, Source: Stannah

Assessment of your mobility and falls risk is an important first step, both to help determine whether or not you need a mobility aid and to help you choose the most suitable mobility aid, or assistive device, for your needs. There are three types of

assessments, including:

- Screening tools or questionnaires to determine why you may be at risk for a fall (including whether or not you have had a prior fall or have any medical conditions that put you at greater fall risk)
- Assessments of physical function, to examine your balance, strength and mobility such as the Sit to Stand Test, Tandem Stance Test or Timed Up and Go Test (these are conducted by trained physiotherapists, occupational therapists or other healthcare providers)
- A home safety checklist to determine if there are any hazards in your home that increase your risk of falling



Non-slip bath mat, Source: AMG Medical

In addition to getting advice from doctors and pharmacists, people living with osteoporosis can benefit from speaking with allied health professionals such as occupational therapists and physiotherapists. These regulated clinicians will assess you, your home and/or workplace and your activities in order to recommend effective solutions to everyday problems - including ways to prevent falls and injury. Home health equipment retailers are another resource who can provide information about assistive devices that promote independence and reduce the risk of falls. They also provide repair services and work with individuals, caregivers and clinicians to change or upgrade equipment if your needs change.

When mobility aids and assistive devices are matched to your individual need(s) and used correctly, they can reduce the risk of falls and broken bones. In addition, they can increase your mobility, enhance your independence and improve your quality of life. This is especially important if you have osteoporosis because you are more likely to break a bone after a minor fall.



Rollator walker, Source: Human Care

There are many assistive devices that can reduce the risk of falls and fractures for people living with osteoporosis. They are based on several principles that include improving balance and reducing the “pain and strain” forces of:

- 1) bending, reaching and twisting
- 2) transitioning between lying, sitting or standing positions
- 3) walking on level ground
- 4) walking up (ascending) or down (descending) steps

These will be discussed in Part 2 of Mobility and Assistive Devices to Reduce the Risk of Falls and Fractures, which will be the next issue of COPING.

If you have questions about this article or any other aspect of osteoporosis, please call toll-free 1-800-463-6842 (416-696-2663 in the Greater Toronto Area) to speak to an information counsellor.

FUNNY BONE:

I went to the bank the other day and asked the banker to check my balance, so she pushed me!

Moved? Changed phone number or e-mail address?

Let us know by calling 1-800-463-6842 or emailing copn@osteoporosis.ca and we'll update your information. This will ensure we keep you up to date!

A Recipe from our Sponsor

Lychee & blueberry smoothie

Course: *Beverages & Snacks*

Preparation Time: *3 mins*

Yields: *4 servings*

2/3 milk product serving(s) per person

Calcium: 20% DV/ 215 mg

A refreshing drink with calcium for strong bones today and tomorrow!



Ingredients

- 1 can (565 g) lychees in syrup
- 1 cup (250 mL) **plain yogurt**
- 1 cup (250 mL) **Milk**
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) fresh blueberries

Preparation

Empty the can of lychees including the syrup into a blender. Add remaining ingredients and blend for 30 seconds or until smooth. Serve.

For more information about this recipe:

<http://www.dairygoodness.ca/getenough/recipes/lychee-blueberry-smoothie>

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