

## Why a fall happens

Why does a fall happen? Fundamentally, no matter who you are and what age you are, here's why:

***Challenge to balance or strength > Ability to stay upright"***

In other words, we fall when we experience some kind of event that challenges our balance or strength. If this event overwhelms our ability to remain upright, down we go.

### 3 types of fall risk factors you should consider

- **Health-based risks.** This includes things like balance problems, weakness, chronic illnesses, vision problems, and medication side-effects. They are specific to an individual person.
- **Environmental risks.** These are things like home hazards (e.g. loose throw rugs), outside hazards (e.g. icy sidewalks), or risky footwear (e.g. high heels). This category can also include improper use of a walker, cane, or other assistive device.
- **Triggers:** These are the sudden or occasional events that cause a challenge to balance or strength. They can be things like a strong dog pulling on a leash, or even health-related events like a moment of low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) in a person with diabetes.

It's also a good idea to ask lots of questions **after** a fall. You can learn more about what to ask here: [8 Things to Have the Doctor Check After an Aging Person Falls](#).

### Take the next step: create a personalized fall prevention plan

Remember, older adults usually fall because a) multiple risk factors make them vulnerable to falling, and b) a stumble or moment of weakness triggers the actual fall.

Most fall risk factors are health-based, and are related to chronic medical conditions or medications. And then some fall risk factors are environmental, and involve the home or outside environment.

You can definitely reduce fall risk by encouraging strength and balance exercises, and by optimizing the home environment. (Learn more about good strength and balance exercises here: [Videos Illustrating Otago Exercises for Fall Prevention](#).)

But you'll be most effective in preventing falls if you can get your doctors to help you understand your loved one's personal fall risk factors.