

Weather Safety for Older Adults

Autumn Fall Risks

Severe autumn weather and conditions can increase your risk of falling. Falls are not a normal part of aging, but as we age, we may be more susceptible to serious injury from a fall. Each hour in Ohio, six adults age 65 and older are taken to the emergency room due to a fall, and one of those will be admitted to the hospital. However, most falls can be prevented when you understand your risks and take steps to remove or avoid hazards.

- **Falling leaves** – Leaves, branches and other debris from trees can make walkways slippery or hide tripping hazards, like uneven surfaces, edges and steps. Keep walkways clean, and if you can't see that the surface is clear and flat, pick another path.
- **Less sunlight** – Invest in extra lamps, nightlights and exterior pathway lights to make sure you can always see where you are walking, especially around doorways and stairs. Use the highest-wattage bulbs recommended for your fixtures.
- **Reduced activity** – Your body needs exercise year-round to prevent falls. Ask your doctor or physical therapist about indoor exercises that can help you build and maintain balance, strength and stamina when you can't venture out.
- **Rain and Mud** – Mud can be as slippery as snow and ice and can get on a variety of surfaces indoors and out. Avoid walkways that are covered with mud. Clean wet and dried mud off of your shoes and walking aids to maintain the most traction.
- **Winterizing chores** – If winterizing your home includes cleaning gutters, changing light bulbs or other tasks that require you to get up high, use a step ladder or a step stool with a handle. Do not climb on chairs or other furniture that was not designed for that purpose.

Check on your neighbors

For a variety of reasons, older friends and relatives may have a harder time adjusting during extreme conditions than younger people do. If severe weather is forecasted or has just occurred, check in on older friends and family members to ensure that they are okay and that they have the resources they need to stay safe and healthy.

Do a risk assessment:

- Do they need medical attention?
- Do they have safe food and water?
- Is the temperature in their home comfortable?
- Who will they call if they need help?



STEADY U Ohio is a statewide initiative to prevent falls among older adults. Take a falls risk self-assessment, sign up for news and resources, interact on Facebook and Twitter and get a variety of falls-prevention tips.

www.steadyu.ohio.gov