



# FALLS & BRAIN HEALTH

wiha  
Wisconsin Institute  
for Healthy Aging

Brain health and preventing falls go hand in hand—and there are things you can do to protect yourself for both! People with cognitive decline are at a higher risk of falling due to issues with memory, judgment, coordination, and balance. In fact, falls are more common and more dangerous in individuals with dementia, often leading to serious injuries and faster health decline. Falls—especially those causing a head injury—can increase the risk of developing dementia later in life. The good news? Falls are preventable! With a few simple steps, you can protect your brain, stay steady, and keep doing the things you love — safely and independently.

## Practice Balance & Strength Exercises

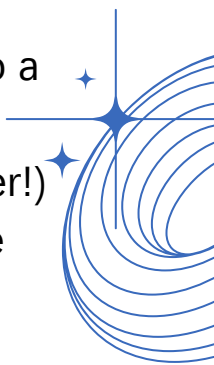
Improving your balance and increasing strength can have a noticeable impact on your risk of falls and reduce your risk of a brain injury due to a fall. Follow physical activity guidelines that recommend:

- 3 days a week of activities that improve balance (daily is even better!)
- At least 2 days a week of activities that strengthen all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms)
- At least 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity activity (such as walking) or 75 minutes a week of vigorous-intensity activity (such as hiking, jogging, or running)

## Talk with Your Healthcare Provider


It's important to be honest with your healthcare provider and share your concerns about any fears of falling. You can ask your health care team for a falls risk assessment, discuss seeing a specialist like a physical or occupational therapist, review your medications, and talk about changes in your vision and hearing.

<https://wihealthyaging.org/brain>



## Take In Your Surroundings

Since we spend so much time at home, it's important to make sure our space is set up for safety. Here are a few ways to reduce your risk of falls:

- Improve lighting — put nightlights in dimly lit places or install additional lights in places like staircases
  - Remove throw rugs, especially if they bunch up or have turned up edges
  - Reduce clutter — especially in walkways and on the stairs
  - Be aware of uneven pathways and slippery surfaces
  - Install grab bars — particularly in the bathroom — and handrails wherever there are steps
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## Find Good Support

From our feet to our surroundings, good support can make all the difference! Be sure to wear safe footwear (think tread, laces, and a thin, firm midsole) and consider using additional supports like a cane, walker, or walking sticks. Stay upright and protect your brain!

## Get Support from WIHA

The Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging (WIHA) offers falls programs — Stepping On and Pisando Fuerte — researched and proven to reduce falls by 31%! Visit [wihealthyaging.org](https://wihealthyaging.org) to find a workshop and keep your brain and body safe from injury.

For more falls prevention information, visit: [fallsfreewi.org](https://fallsfreewi.org). Find resources, printable guides, exercise videos, safety checklists, an interactive Home Safety Challenge, and more!

For more brain health information, visit:

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/dementia/resources.htm>.