

Health and Safety – Tips for Successful Aging at Home

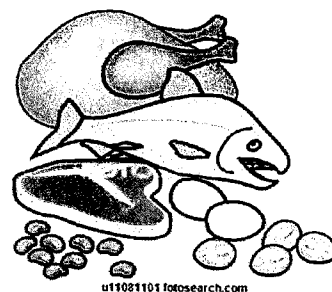
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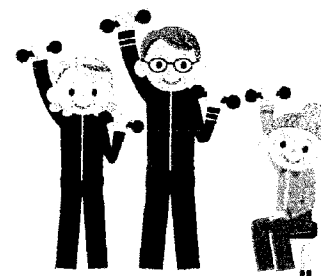
1. **Make sure you are drinking plenty of water.** As we get older, we lose muscle mass that holds onto water we need to prevent from getting dehydrated. Drink 6 to 8 glasses of non-caffeinated water each day.



2. **Eat protein at every meal every day.** Older adults need to have protein in their diet at every meal in order to keep muscle mass. Muscle mass helps with maintaining balance and prevent falls. Protein includes beef, pork, fish, poultry, eggs, cheese, other dairy, and beans (legumes). Stay away from red meats, as red meat includes high amounts of animal fat (saturated fats), which contributes to heart disease. Older adults should have between 2 to 3 oz of protein at every meal.



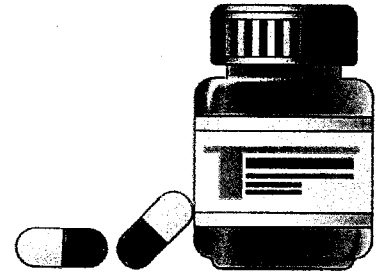
3. **Stay active and lift small weights.** To protect muscle and bone health, it is important to stay active and lift small weights (resistance training). Walk on level ground for ½ hour 3X per week, participate in a low-impact exercise class, lift small weights (soup cans will work!), and use balance exercise to help prevent falls.



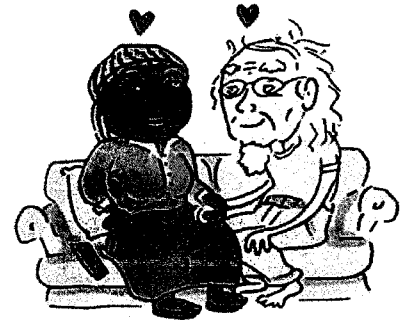
4. **Get rid of tripping hazards!** Throw rugs, clutter on the floor (old newspapers or magazines), poor lighting (especially on stairs), light or extension cords, pets, low toilet seats, unstable chairs, cracks in sidewalks are primary fall hazards for older adults. Get rid of the flimsy slippers and socks and make sure you have rubber soles. Use handrails on stairs and place some in the bathroom by the toilet to help lift. Make sure that there are handles in the shower and use a shower mat to prevent slipping. The rug outside the shower/bath should have a good rubber bottom.



5. **Know how your medications affect your balance.** Some medications (high blood pressure, sleep aids, allergy medications, and pain medications) can cause you to become dizzy or lose your balance. If those medications do affect your balance or cause you to feel dizzy, you need to be very careful on when you take those medications and do not plan to do activities that could lead to a fall.



6. **Be social!** Studies have shown that older adults who isolate themselves in their homes are at much higher risk of falls, depression, and medication misuse. Use resources such as the Faith Community Nurse, My Neighbors, Yancey Transportation, and the Senior Center to stay connected.



7. **Use Assistive Devices to help you keep your balance.** If you are feeling unsteady on your feet, find a walking stick, or cane to help you with your balance. If you tire easily, use a walker with a seat – that way you can just turn the walker around and sit down when you need to. It is better to have an assistive device than to have a fall resulting in surgery and a long healing process.

