

# WATCHING your STEP

BRAIN  smart™

A Natividad Medical Center Community Program

## Prevent Fall-Related Injuries

Falls are the leading cause of injuries for Americans aged 65 and older. An estimated 2.8 million seniors are treated in emergency rooms for fall-related injuries each year, and more than 800,000 are hospitalized. Time takes a toll on all of us, and we must be willing to acknowledge that we aren't as agile as we once were to maintain a safe environment. **It helps to be observant and ask questions. Here are some places to start.**

### Environment

Look for danger areas in your home. Anything that presents a slip or fall risk should be addressed, starting with throw rugs, clutter and uneven surfaces. Would ADA grab bars help in the bathroom? Are there dark areas where an extra light would help?

### Health Concerns

Diabetes, arthritis and stroke can all affect balance. Medication also can contribute to the risk of falls by causing dizziness, dehydration or interacting adversely with other medications. When in doubt, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

### Vision

Aging eyes deliver less light to the retina. That makes it harder to recognize contrasting edges, tripping hazards and obstacles. Consider when you last had an eye exam and if it may be time to see your optometrist or ophthalmologist.

### Changes in Mobility

We all lose muscle mass as we age. This can affect your ability to manage stairs and other once routine life activities. Often, a physical therapist can help.

### Help Is Available

Medicare covers an annual wellness exam, which is a great time to take up concerns with your physician. Use the opportunity to make sure your living situation is as safe as possible. Medicare also covers some durable medical equipment, such as walkers and canes, that may help.

**Falls Are the #1 Cause of Traumatic Brain Injury – The Risks Should Not Be Ignored.**



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