

PREVENTING FALLS

Falling means accidentally landing on the floor or another object, like a bed or chair. Falling may mean tripping over an object, falling or slipping to the ground, or losing your balance and grabbing onto a surface or object to stop from landing on the ground. You may think because of your age or general health before your cancer diagnosis that you are not at risk for falling. **A cancer diagnosis and/or cancer treatment can put you at high risk of falling.** Our plan is to partner with you to prevent you from falling and keep you safe while you are at Roswell Park and at home.

You may think that falling will not cause you any serious harm. For someone in cancer treatment, falling can have serious consequences and could result in serious injury, delay in treatment, or hospitalization.

Why am I at risk for falling?

- **Weakness and fatigue:** A normal gait is when a person is upright, erect, with arms swinging freely at their sides. Your cancer treatments, including surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation, can cause fatigue and weakness, which can lead to trouble walking distances, or an unsteady gait.
- **Side effects:** Some drugs affect your vision, hearing, and balance.
- **Neuropathy:** Nerves damaged by treatments can cause numbness, tingling, or pain in the feet and hands, making it more difficult to walk and stand.
- **Items in your home** that may cause you to slip or trip.
- **Unsafe footwear** such as loose slippers, flip flops, sandals with no backs, and slippery socks.
- **You've fallen in last 3 months or since last visit.**
- **Not using your walker or cane or leaning on your IV pole to help you walk.**







What should I do if I fall?

- If alone and you feel unsteady or about to fall, try to lower yourself to the ground by sliding down a wall.
- If you fear you have seriously injured yourself when falling at home, **call 911 immediately.**
- If you can't get up and a phone is not within reach, crawl or shimmy over to a phone and call. You may also crawl towards a heavy piece of furniture (such as a couch) to help yourself to get up.
- After a fall, **DO NOT** get up quickly. Take a few breaths to stabilize yourself. Then, slowly come to a sitting position. **If you are dizzy, DO NOT stand up;** call for assistance if available. If you are **NOT** dizzy or lightheaded, **slowly** rise to a standing position.
- After you stand, check yourself for injuries and call your home clinic **immediately** to tell them you fell. If you don't know your clinic's number, call Roswell Park at **716-845-2300** or toll free **1-800-ROSWELL (1-800-767-9355)**. They will ask you several questions about the fall and symptoms. Once they are finished with their questions, they will give you instructions based on your symptoms.
- If you fall while you are at Roswell, immediately call for help or send your caregiver for help. If you're an inpatient and your call button is not within reach, shout loudly so someone will hear and come to help you right away.



If you are a fall risk while you are at Roswell, your nurse will put a yellow bracelet on you to help you stay safe during your visit.

How can I prevent falling?

	Inpatient	Outpatient	At Home
Previous Fall 	Use your CALL LIGHT to alert us when you need to get up or use the bathroom – especially the first time you get out of bed. WAIT for us to come help.	Bring a caregiver with you to your appointments to help you get around.	In your tub or shower, use bathmats, non-slip stickers, and grab bars. You may also want to use a stool or chair in the shower so you can sit while bathing.
Use a Cane or Walker 	ALWAYS tell us if you feel dizzy, weak, lightheaded, or unsteady.	Bring your walker/cane to your appointments. There are wheelchairs at the hospital's front entrance, with valet parking. If you park in the ramp and need a wheelchair, call 716-845-5718 (Mon.– Fri., 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. and Sat. and Sun. from 8 a.m. to noon.) At Amherst or Niagara Falls locations, call ahead and they can meet you at the door with a wheelchair.	Keep your cane, walker, or wheelchair next to you and use it every time you get up, even for short trips.
Unsteady Gait 	Use your eyeglasses, hearing aids, cane, walker, crutches, or braces when walking.	Use the grab bars in the bathroom to help keep you steady. If you need assistance in the bathroom, look for a call bell to call for help.	Keep pathways clear of clutter. Remove any items, furniture, or rugs that may cause you to trip. Clean up spills immediately. Make sure you know where pets are before you walk.
	Wear proper shoes – lightweight, good fit, non-skid soles, heels less than 1", shoelaces/Velcro® to secure the fit, and a back to the heel. Avoid floppy slippers, flip flops, bare feet, or loose socks. Keep items that you use often within easy reach. Use good lighting in all areas.		
Dizzy 	If you have been lying down for a while, sit on side of bed, chair, or exam table for a few minutes before you stand. (Helps lessen dizziness from a sudden position change). ASK FOR HELP if you feel dizzy or weak.		
Have an IV 	DO NOT use your IV pole to help you stand up. Use your hands to push off your mattress or chair to stand. If you feel at all unsteady, ASK FOR HELP .		
Medications 	Review your medications with your doctor or pharmacist to learn if any drug may cause dizziness, or affect your balance or coordination.		

Concerns about walking, strength, or balance? Ask for a referral to physical therapy (PT). Staying active lessens your risk of falling.