



# Home Health Care

## Tips for Slip and Fall Prevention

Home health care workers providing care to patients at their homes are exposed to varying types of slip, trip and fall hazards. The type of footwear chosen by employees can make a big difference in reducing the risk of a fall.

Here are a number of items that should be considered when selecting footwear and walking up to a patient's home:

- **Footwear Selection:** When purchasing footwear, select a type that can work well in any conditions. The sole should be a non-skid, treaded composite material; not a smooth, non-treaded material made of plastic or leather. They should be water repellent to keep your feet warm and dry. Select a pair that will provide ankle support when walking on uneven ground.

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1-800-258-2667

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## Useful Resources:

- <http://www.Wikihow.com/Fall-Safely>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/healthcare/>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docket/archive/pdfs/NIOSH-114/0114-NIOSHPublication2010-125.pdf>

## For more information

UH Loss Control is committed to providing home health care workers access to resources and training that can help them work safer. For more information, contact your United Heartland Loss Control representative or call 1-800-258-2667.

- **Outdoor/Indoor Footwear:** Outdoor boots offer the best traction when walking from the vehicle to the home. These may be bulky to wear inside the home, so take along an indoor pair of shoes that you can change into.
- **Poor Lighting/Darkness:** Move slower in the early morning or evening when you cannot see as well. Pay more attention to your travel path looking for changes in grade, icy or wet patches, rocks, holes and cracks.
- **Parking Vehicle:** If possible, choose a parking spot with good lighting. During the winter, make sure the location is clear of snow and ice.
- **Exiting and Entering Vehicles:** Use care when exiting vehicles. Pivot in the seat and place both feet on the ground before standing to obtain more stability. Use the door and vehicle frame to grab onto for stability when exiting and entering the vehicle (i.e., minimum 3-point contact). You can also use the vehicle for support when walking toward the home. When re-entering the vehicle, sit down on the seat first with both feet on the ground, then bring legs into the vehicle.
- **Stairs and Handrails:** Inspect stairs at the patient's house during the intake interview. Make sure they are in good repair and have handrails. Always use a handrail. During winter, use extreme caution if snow and ice are built up on the stairs.
- **Carrying Materials and Supplies:** Carrying items increases the chance for a fall because your arms are occupied and cannot be used for balance. Use a rolling bag to transport the items from the vehicle into the home.
- **Entering the Home:** When entering a home or building, remove as much snow and water from your boots as possible. Dry the bottom of the shoes on an entryway floor mat, if available. Take notice that floors and stairs may be wet and slippery. Walk carefully.
- **Inside the Home:** Within patient homes, be aware of hazards such as wet floors, loose rugs and cords. Examine the walking path throughout the home for these hazards.
- **Fall Technique Tips:** No one wants to fall, but preparing for it ahead of time could help reduce the extent of injuries.
  - If falling forward or sideways, bend at the knees and waist to reduce the height of the fall. Distribute the force by rolling along your thigh, waist and side of body. Lastly, use your arms to protect your head from striking the ground by reaching slightly forward with palms making contact with the ground. Try to avoid catching your fall with your arm straight out.
  - If falling backward, bend at the knees and waist to reduce the height of the fall. Tuck your chin or place one hand behind your head to protect it from striking the ground. Attempt to sit down rather than striking the ground with the flat of the back or head.

