

Vermont Falls Prevention Guide

September 2026

The Vermont Falls Prevention Resource Guide features facts about falls both nationally and in Vermont, information about free online resources, screening and assessment suggestions as well as services available to Vermonters around the state.

This guide was assembled for use for those in midlife and older, health care providers, home visiting programs, community organizations, family members, and individuals interested in learning about fall prevention.

If you need help accessing this information or have questions, please email the Vermont Department of Health, AHS.VDHIjuryandViolencePreventionProgram@vermont.gov or the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living, AHS.DAIFallsPrevention@vermont.gov.

Key Points

- **Vermont is ranked as 5th highest for unintentional fall-related deaths.**
- **More than a quarter of VT adults age 45+ fell in the past year.**
- **Low-income individuals and those living with a disability are more likely to experience a fall.**
- **Falls prevention is a health priority for VT.**

Vermont Ranks #5 for Fall-Related Deaths

- Accidental falls are a leading cause of all unintentional injuries and deaths among adults aged 45 and older. From 2020-2024, falls were responsible for 833 deaths of Vermont residents age 65 or older. Ice and snow, along with a lack of sidewalks in rural areas, are contributing factors.
- There is an average of 167 deaths related to falls each year in Vermont and the rate is increasing.

167	27%	32%	#5
• Vermonters 65+ die from falls each year — and rising	• of VT adults 45+ fell in the past year, 2023 (vs. 25% nationally)	• of VT adults 65+ fell in the past year, 2023	• Vermont's national ranking for fall-related deaths (2025)



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802-863-7200

Shown below are some of the risk factors that can increase an individual's risk of a fall. The work of numerous partners, agencies, providers, clinics and hospitals across the state are collaborating to make falls less likely and their impact less harmful.

Risk Factors	
Medications Sedatives, diuretics, narcotics, and muscle relaxants can impair balance and alertness. Ask your doctor or pharmacist to review your medications.	Age Risk nearly doubles after age 75 due to changes in balance, bone density, and muscle strength.
Fear of Falling Fear itself increases risk – it causes hesitant, unconfident movement. Staying active (with guidance) is proactive.	Home Hazards 60-80% of falls happen at home. Loose rugs, cords, poor lighting, slippery steps and outdoor ice are common causes.
Physical and Cognitive Health Heart disease, vision loss, foot problems, low blood pressure on standing, dehydration and neurological conditions including dementia all raise risk.	Ice and Snow Icy winters can pose a hazard doing common tasks like getting the mail and firewood. Installing railings, having salt or sand on hand, and using shoe crampons for traction decrease risk of falling during winter.
Nutrition & Fitness Poor diet, dehydration and inactivity reduce muscle strength and balance.	Substance Use Excess Alcohol and regular cannabis use both significantly raise fall risk.

Falls Prevention is a Community and State Priority

Numerous state and local agencies, departments, organizations, care teams, home visiting programs, clinicians and emergency responders are engaged in preventing and treating falls.

- The state's first multi-sector plan on aging, [Age Strong VT, 2023-2033](#), contains falls prevention as part of its Healthy Aging for All goal.
- The Falls Free VT Coalition and partners are committed to decreasing falls in Vermont to improve quality of life and safety.
- Knowing if you are at higher risk of falls can be a useful tool for identifying next steps for prevention.
 - If you have fallen more than once or been injured in a fall over the past year, or you sometimes lose your balance, you are at higher risk.

- **Risk of falls increases with age but should not be considered an inevitable part of aging.**

- Due to the many reasons an individual might fall, prevention must thoroughly address and promote strategies to reduce risk.
- Programming needs to include early and ongoing assessment, exercise plans, medication management and home safety measures.

Many falls can be prevented.

Start with these steps:

1. Review your medications for fall risk. This is one of the most effective steps you can take. Ask your doctor or pharmacist about your medications and fall risk.
2. Remove hazards in and around the home such as loose rugs, exposed cords, and clutter. Add grab bars and rails, non-slip mats, and better lighting indoors and outdoors. Walk through your home with a falls prevention specialist or checklist.
3. Balance and strength exercises are among the most effective fall prevention tools. Be proactive about being active and building muscle strength. A physical therapist can help you start safely.
4. Consult with a health professional about getting a fall risk assessment and when appropriate, a bone density test. You can also perform a self-assessment: [Brochure - Stay Independent](#).

5. See your eye specialist regularly to get your vision checked.
6. Share with your care team any falls or near-falls, even if you were not hurt. They can help identify and address your specific risks.
7. Avoid being sedentary or limiting your activity level, which can make a fall more likely. A falls prevention program can help you move more confidently and to take steps in overcoming the fear of falling.
8. Avoid darkened stairways or risky activities such as standing on chairs or being near the top step of a ladder.
9. Walking on ice can be very dangerous, especially because the ice is not always visible. To reduce falls in winter, be careful on ice-covered walkways, including sidewalks, steps, driveways, and porches. Use a cane with a grip tip, boots with treads, crampons on shoes, and spread sand or cat litter outdoors to help with traction.
10. Wearing shoes that provide good traction and insulation with rubber treads can help reduce falls, as can adjusting one's walk to mimic a penguin-- lightly bend your knees, take short steps, and walk slowly.
11. After a storm, clear snow from walkways and spread a deicer, such as rock salt or another de-icing product, as soon as possible to reduce ice. Sprinkling sand or wood ash can also help provide traction on ice-covered walkways.
12. Hire help with shoveling to remove snow and ice or barter to trade services. Order groceries for delivery or ask a neighbor to pick up items for you while shopping.

Falls prevention is a top priority of the state, and important factor for improving health and well-being of all Vermonters. The state has integrated falls prevention into its healthy aging strategies and services which are included in its multi-sector plan on aging, Age Strong VT and the State Plan on Aging. Contact the Falls Free VT Coalition for more information AHS.DAIFallsPrevention@vermont.gov

Falls Prevention Resources

- [Patient & Caregiver Resources | STEADI - Older Adult Fall Prevention | CDC](#) Educational materials and tools in English and Spanish that organizations serving older adults can use to implement fall prevention strategies.
- [MyMobility Plan | Older Adult Drivers | CDC](#) The MyMobility Plan is designed to keep people safe, mobile, and independent as they age. CDC developed this tool for older adults to prevent falls.
- [Annual Wellness Visit | CMS](#) The Annual Wellness Visit is a free preventive service for Medicare Part B beneficiaries, offered once a year. It requires your doctor to perform a comprehensive health risk assessment that includes activities of daily living (ADLs) such as walking and balance.
- [Talking to Your Doctor About Falls](#) Helpful tips on how to talk to your doctor about falls from the National Council on Aging.
- Area Agencies on Aging offer free falls prevention information and exercise classes. There are five agencies in Vermont serving older residents statewide.
 - Northwestern Vermont [Fall Prevention Programs for Older Adults in VT | Age Well](#);
 - Central Vermont [Exercise and Wellness Classes](#);
 - Southwestern Vermont [Wellness — Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging \(SVCOA\)](#);
 - Northeastern Vermont [NEK Council on Aging - Wellness Program](#);
 - Southeastern Vermont [Health & Wellness | Aging Resources in Vermont | Senior Solutions](#)
- [Fall Prevention Resources | University of Vermont Health](#) Learn more about UVM's Health resources including home interventions and fall risk assessments.

- [Age Strong VT](#) Age Strong VT is the state's multi sector plan on aging which includes falls prevention strategies.
- [National Council on Aging \(NCOA\)](#) Provides a range of resources for professionals and the public on [falls prevention tips for housing](#), programming, social media toolkit, videos and resources.
- [Prevent Falls | Vermont Department of Health](#) Learn more about how to prevent falls from the Division of Injury Prevention at the Vermont Department of Health.