



# Simple solutions for a safer home

Falls are to blame for most injuries in older people, and once a person has had a fall, he or she is two to three times more likely to have another. With this in mind, Advocate Good Shepherd Hospital has launched a fall prevention education program called “Remembering When.”

Kathy Phelan, R.N., trauma coordinator at Good Shepherd Hospital, has tailored the program to the older population in the community and the types of injuries they experience from falls. She sees lacerations, concussions and other similar injuries in patients, but most common, Phelan says, are hip fractures, with most occurring in people ages 70 and older.

“Hip fractures usually result from slips and falls in the home,” she says. That’s why it’s important to take precautions to make your home safe to prevent falls from happening in the first place. Another cause is osteoporosis, which causes bones to weaken and break more easily from a minor fall such as tripping over a rug.

provider about bone health and whether any of their current medications can cause drowsiness or make them unsteady when walking.

Attendees learn exercises to keep in shape—from simple moves done from an armchair to more energetic ones like walking and water aerobics. They also receive a packet containing slippers with treads, a nightlight and a fall-prevention checklist. Phelan advises everyone to check their home for any danger zones and suggests that a home-safety checklist (at left) is a good starting point.

## Getting the word out

Phelan hopes Good Shepherd Hospital will see fewer fall-related injuries over the next year as a result of the “Remembering When” program. She plans to conduct train-the-trainer events in local senior centers, church groups and assisted-living facilities where she’ll teach others to get the word out about fall prevention. “No one likes to think they’re at risk for falls,” she says, “but with the aging population, more and more people will be faced with this possibility. The more people we can reach, the better.”

## Home-safety checklist

The first step to preventing falls is making sure your home is safe and free from risky situations.

- > Secure or remove rugs that slip and slide.
- > Remove clutter.
- > Make sure there’s a phone by the bedside.
- > Install handrails on both sides of the staircase.
- > Install handrails in the bathroom.
- > Ensure that there’s proper lighting.
- > Use a seat in the shower.
- > Clean up spills promptly.
- > Place electric cords neatly and away from the floor.

## Use care and prepare

During the 90-minute classes, Phelan discusses safety issues, including wearing proper shoes, avoiding alcohol and planning ahead. “Older adults should also have an annual physical and eye exam,” she says. They should talk to their health care

## > Be safety savvy!

For more information about the fall-prevention program, call **1-800-3-ADVOCATE (1-800-323-8622)**.

