

Falling for Fall - Preventing and minimizing injuries from falling

Let's review some important hints to prevent, and minimize injuries from, future falls, inspired by information from the AARP's Dec 2017-Jan. 2018 issue. But first understand falls are accidents. Although they may at times be prevented, they cannot always be avoided.

- Keep in the moment – mindfulness – watch the ground ahead and be aware of your surroundings. When hiking where there are a lot of roots and fallen branches or uneven sidewalks, keep your eyes open for potential trip hazards and attempt to avoid them. Trekking poles can also be helpful.
- When falling isn't avoidable, prepare by staying bent. Instead of reaching out with stiff arms and elbows, bend your elbows and knees. Stiff arms can often lead to broken bones.
- Falls going forward can lead to serious head injuries but turning your head to the side can lessen a serious impact to the front of your face. If falling backwards - tuck your chin to your chest, so you avoid hitting the back of your head.
- As you are bending to lessen a fall, attempt to fall on the meaty or muscle part of your back, butt or thighs, not on the bones. If possible, aim for a soft or grassy area of the ground.
- Keep falling, roll into the fall, this allows the fall to cover more areas of the body, instead of concentrating the impact on one part of the body.
- Try practicing a fall on your bed so that falling has a "natural" feel. It will allow you to react correctly when a fall does happen.
- Work on increasing your body's ability to stay balanced. Stand with feet together, lift one foot about 1 inch, and hold for about 30 seconds – complete about 10 reps on each leg.

By Julie Wojcik