



Alaska Senior Fall Prevention



What Can You Do?

Prepared by the Alaska Commission on Aging and the
Alaska Senior Fall Prevention Coalition

September 2009

Are you aware that . . .



- ▶ Falls are the second leading cause of accidental death in the United States
- ▶ Seventy-five percent of these falls occur in the older adult population
- ▶ Of the older adults who fall, sustain a hip fracture, and are hospitalized, one third die within a year
- ▶ Health care and rehabilitation costs for falls average 70 billion dollars a year!



And in Alaska, from 2002 through 2006:

- 80 percent of seniors' injury hospitalizations were due to accidental falls
- An average of 579 hospitalizations per year involved seniors who fell
- 50 percent of senior falls occurred from a "slip, trip or stumble" event
- Alcohol was involved in 11 percent of senior falls
- Drugs were involved in 14 percent of senior falls
- Older Alaskans suffered 13 times as many falls as any other type of injury



Most Falls are Preventable

A simple evaluation and assessment can reduce the likelihood of most falls. Assess the following areas:

- ▶ Health & Safety
- ▶ Abilities & Limitations
- ▶ Home Environment and Assistive Aids Available



Health & Safety





Health & Safety

Do you take 4 or more medications daily?





Health & Safety

- ▶ **Have you or those around you noticed a change in your hearing?**





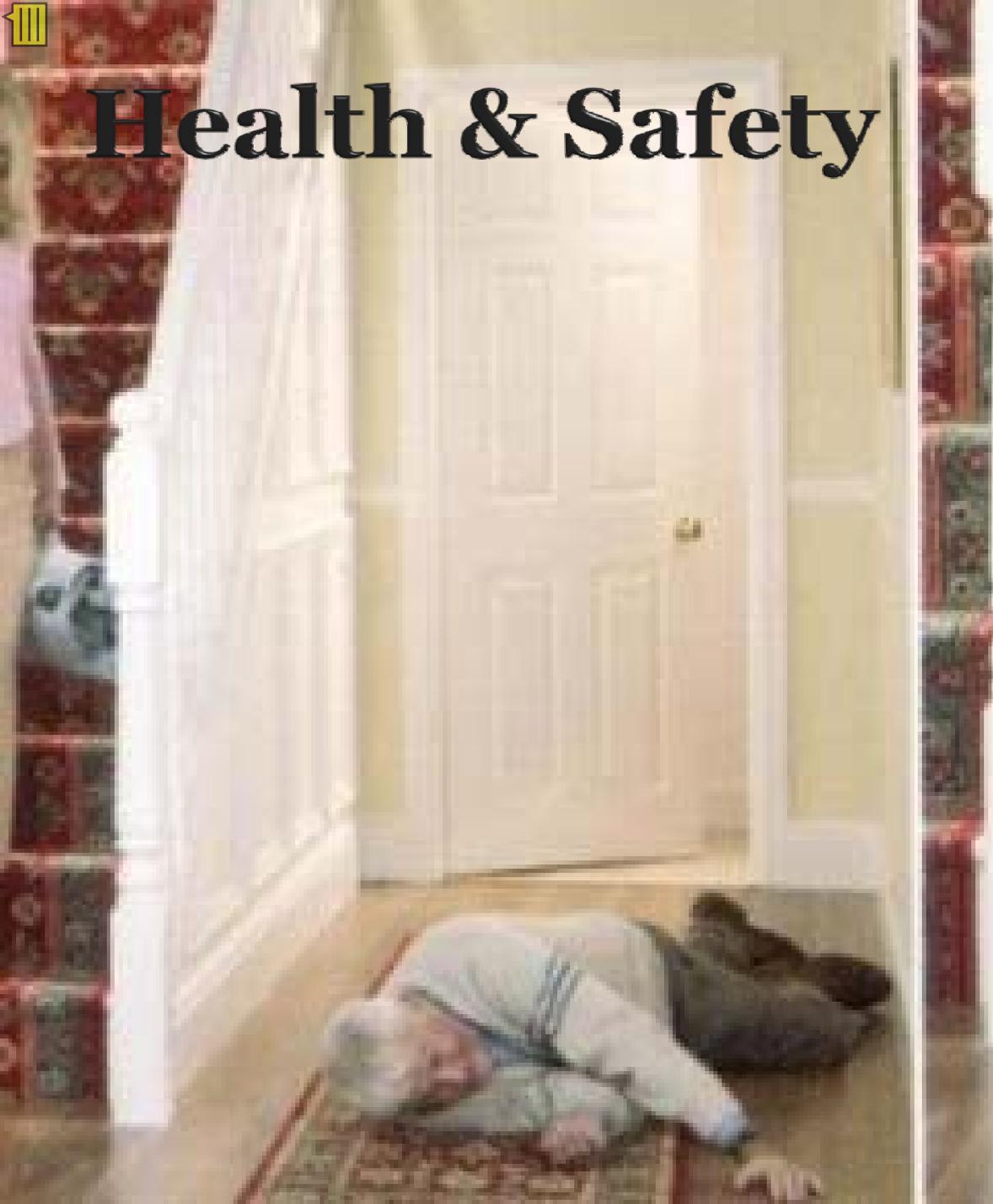
Health & Safety

- ▶ Have you noticed a change in your vision?



Health & Safety

- ▶ **Have you fallen 2 or more times in the past 6 months?**





Health & Safety

- ▶ **Begin or continue a regular exercise program**





Health & Safety

Drink alcohol moderately if at all.

Drinking alcohol increases the chances of a fall, especially in combination with medicine.





Health and Safety

Avoid. . .

- ▶ Icy sidewalks and parking lots
- ▶ Stairs or walkways in ill repair





Abilities & Limitations



Abilities & Limitations

Do you have trouble with . . .

- ▶ Reaching overhead?
- ▶ Picking up objects from the floor?





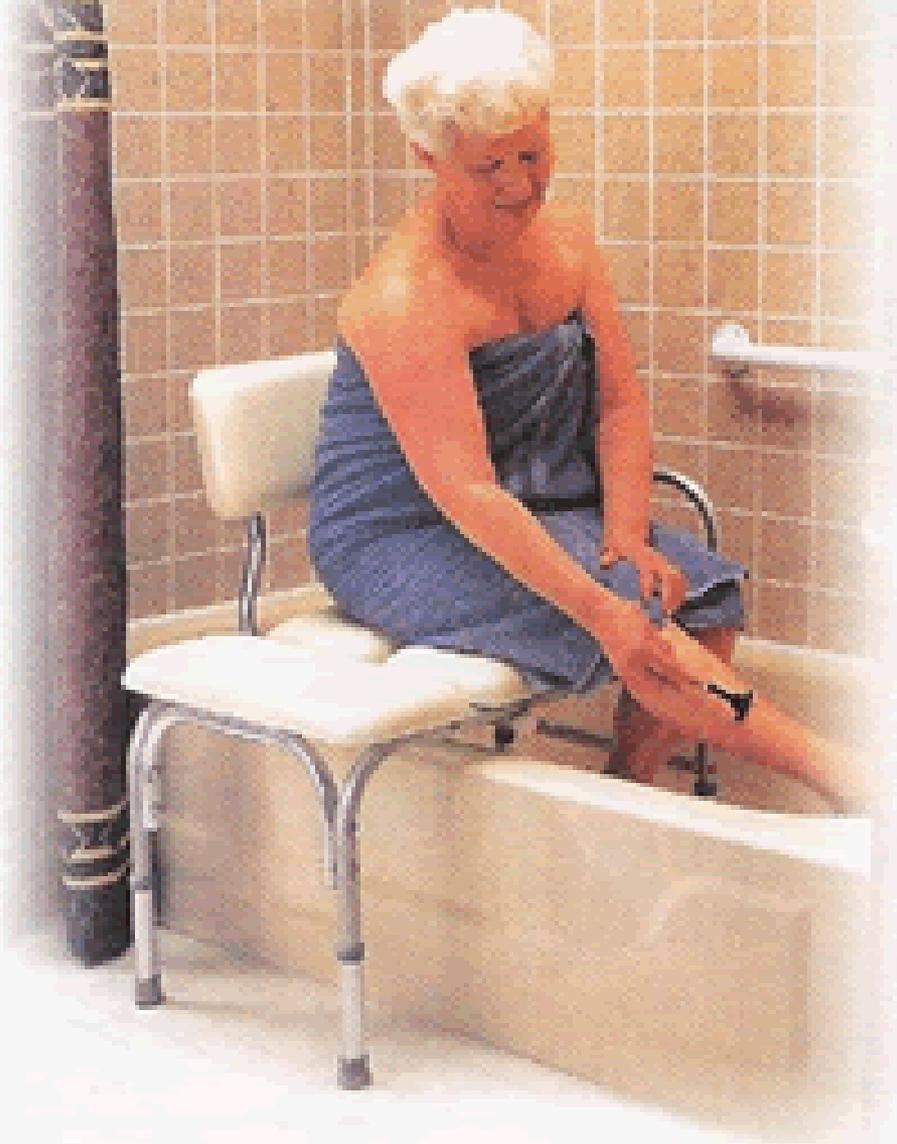
Abilities & Limitations

Do you have trouble with . . .

- ▶ Clutter in the walking space?
- ▶ Dark hallways or stairwells?



Home Environment - Assistive Devices





Home Environment - Assistive Devices

**Do you have
trouble with...**

- ▶ Getting in and out of the bathtub?



Home Environment - Assistive Devices

Do you have trouble with . . .

- ▶ Getting in and out of a chair?
- ▶ Walking without holding on to something?





Home Environment - Assistive Devices

Do you have trouble with . . .

- ▶ Throw rugs?
- ▶ Stairs without rails?



Home Environment - Assistive Devices

Do you have . . .

- ▶ Unsafe Stairs?
- ▶ Broken or worn steps?
- ▶ Unsecured railings?





Home Environment - Assistive Devices

Do you have . . .

- ▶ Loosely run electrical and extension cords?
- ▶ Household appliances out of reasonable reach?

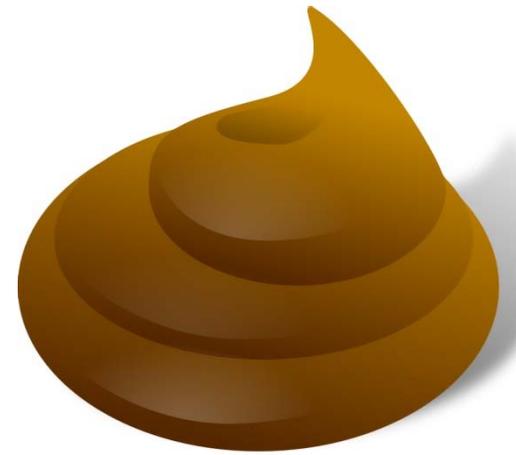




Home Environment - Assistive Devices

Do you have . . .

- ▶ Spills that go unwiped?
- ▶ Wet or puddled bathroom floors?

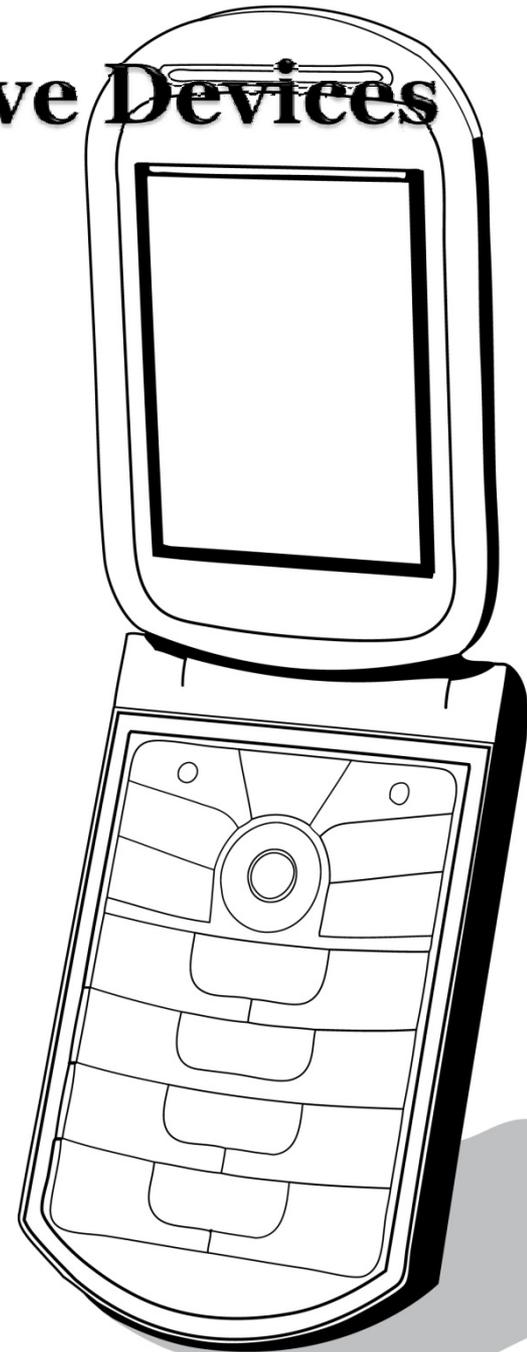




Home Environment - Assistive Devices

Do you have . . .

Telephones within easy reach at multiple locations throughout the house?



Home Environment - Assistive Devices

Know where your pets are before you step....tripping over pets is fairly common.



Home Environment - Assistive Devices

- ▶ **Use a properly fitted cane, walker, or assistive device in good condition. Individuals should not use a variety of objects to substitute for a cane, for example, an umbrella that is not stable or does not have a rubber tip.**



Home Environment - Assistive Devices

Proper shoes can . . .

- ▶ Lead to pain-free mobility
- ▶ Reduce the potential for some foot problems
- ▶ Assist in the correction of some foot problems
- ▶ Help the individual stay active, and reduce the risk of falls
- ▶ Aid in some balance problems



Home Environment - Assistive Devices

Eliminate . . .

- ▶ Open heeled shoes and slippers
- ▶ Plastic soles and heels
- ▶ Soles that grip too much can also contribute to a fall just as easily as soles that are too slippery

Heels that are over ½” high



Home Environment - Assistive Devices

Inspect shoes for . . .

- ▶ Uneven wearing of soles and heels
- ▶ Slippery areas of the soles and heels
- ▶ Any unevenness inside the shoes





Fall Prevention

- ▶ By no means are these all of the ways an individual can fall.
- ▶ Use these common sense guidelines and assessments to help dramatically reduce the chances of a fall occurring.





Fall Prevention

- ▶ **Brought to you by the Alaska Commission on Aging and the Alaska Senior Fall Prevention Coalition**

Partners include:

AgeNet

The Alaska Commission on Aging

Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority

Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse

Division of Alaska Pioneer Homes

Alaska Brain Injury Network

Alaska Mental Health Board

AARP

Division of Senior and Disability Services

Division of Public Health

