



Our Vision: Milwaukee County will be a national leader in the prevention of falls in the adult population through community education, collaboration, and innovation



Milwaukee County Falls Prevention Coalition Resource Series

Vision and Fall Prevention

Background

- Impaired vision doubles the risk of falls in Americans 65 years and older.
- Vision changes are often a hidden impairment and can go unnoticed by family members and caregivers until more obvious changes in abilities occur.
- Vision changes can lead to restricting activities including mobility and participation in activities in unfamiliar locations; this can lead to social isolation and patterns of fear.

Practical Tips

- The Centers for Disease Control recommends an annual, dilated eye exam to reduce the risk of irreversible vision loss and make sure eyeglasses are updated as needed.
- Talk to your eye care professional about single lens versus multi-focal lenses and the potential impact on safe mobility, especially on stairs and in unfamiliar locations.
- Make the home safer by reducing clutter, taping down rugs, optimizing lighting and enhancing contrast.
- Consider motion sensitive lighting in your home, particularly for areas used at night.
- Control glare both indoors and outdoors – use window coverings and cover shiny surfaces indoors; wear a brimmed hat or sunglasses when outdoors.
- Allow time for your eyes to adjust when moving between light and dark environments.
- If peripheral vision has been lost, education on scanning strategies can be helpful to decrease bumping into objects or tripping on items in unfamiliar locations.
- Request a referral to a low vision occupational therapist or other low vision specialist who can fully assess your functional needs and provide education.

Electronic Resources

[Vision Aware Falls Prevention Resources](#) – Video series from National Council on Aging

[VisionAware](#) – Resources for adults, caregivers and health professionals on vision loss.

[Vision Forward](#) – Variety of services for those with visual impairments.

Phone number: 414-615-0100

References:

- Sternberg, K (2013, June) Low vision strategies for the non-low vision specialist. Physical Disabilities Special Interest Section Quarterly (AOTA), 36 (2), 1-4
- Patino, CM., et al. (2010). Central and Peripheral Visual Impairment and the Risk of Falls and Falls with Injury. *Ophthalmology*, 117, 199-206.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Vision Health Initiative. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/visionhealth/home/index.html>