

# The First Step: Fall Prevention Starts With You

Find out if  
you're at risk  
for falling

Prevention tips...

North Shore, Sea to Sky,  
Sunshine Coast, Powell River,  
Richmond and Vancouver

## The Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) wishes to acknowledge:

- ◆ Burnaby Coalition to Prevent Falls in the Community who developed this Booklet (September 1998)
- ◆ The VCH Orthopedic Working Group who developed the Vancouver/Richmond booklet in 2001.
- ◆ The 2001 booklet was revised by a VCH task group including the following members:
  - Vancouver Community: Nancy Cho, Rehabilitation Consultant, Physiotherapist
  - Richmond Health Services: Michele Becker, Occupational Therapist  
Jennie Pillsworth, Physiotherapist
  - North Shore Home Health Services: Eleanor Vuorinen, Physiotherapist
  - Providence Health Care: Sandra Whytock, Clinical Nurse Specialist  
Keith Tam, Physiotherapist, Holy Family Hospital
  - Vancouver General Hospital: Nicole Chan, Physiotherapist  
Sonia Martins, Physiotherapist  
Ranjit Lehal, RN
  - Senior Falls Prevention Consultant: Jenny Elliott, Physiotherapist

# Introduction

Research shows that there are more than twenty risk factors linked to falls. Most of these risks can be reduced through awareness and simple changes. This booklet will outline some risk factors, and things you can do to prevent a fall. It suggests:

- ◆ **What you can do**
- ◆ **Where to go**
- ◆ **Who to phone**

## How to Take Your “First Step” to Prevent Yourself from Falling

1. **Complete** the “**Fall Risk Questions**” on page 3 & 4.
2. For each question answered “**Yes**”, go to the section that applies.
3. Put a check mark beside every item that applies to you.
4. **Complete** the “**My First Steps Plan to Prevent Falls**” on page 25.

**Take control now to stay on your feet.**



## Fall Risk Questions

Do you ...	Circle “Yes” or “No”		If “Yes” go to page ...	
8. Experience difficulty with sleeping?	Yes	No	<b>15-16</b>	Sleep Difficulties
9. Experience difficulty with concentrating?	Yes	No	<b>17-18</b>	Concentration Difficulties
10. Experience shortness of breath?	Yes	No	<b>19</b>	Shortness of Breath
11. Forget to regularly check for safety hazards in and around the home?	Yes	No	<b>20-21</b>	Safety Hazards
12. Walk in places that are uneven, slippery or icy?	Yes	No	<b>22</b>	Walking Hazards
13. Have difficulty keeping your balance?	Yes	No	<b>23</b>	Keeping Your Balance
14. Have frequent slips, trips, near falls, or falls?	Yes	No	*Please read the complete booklet.	

# Dizziness

What Can Cause Dizziness	What you can do	Where to go or Who to Phone
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Standing up quickly from a chair.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Getting up quickly from lying down.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Low blood pressure.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> High blood pressure.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Medication side effects.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Inner ear problems.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Poor eating habits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sit on the side of the bed for a few minutes before you stand up.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> After standing, pause and take one slow deep breath before you take a step.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Have your blood pressure checked regularly.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Tell your doctor if your medication is making you drowsy or dizzy.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Have your ears checked.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Do not go longer than five hours without eating during the day.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> See your family doctor.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Drop in programs for blood pressure checks are held at some community centres: See page 26 &amp; Page 27 for the list of community centres, neighbourhood houses, and senior's centres.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Dizzy Clinic at Vancouver Hospital, doctor's referral required. <b>604-875-4005</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Dial-a-dietitian <b>604-732-9191 or 1-800-667-diet (3438)</b></li> </ul>

# Medication Use

What Can Cause Medication Concerns	What you can do	Where to go or Who to Phone
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Taking over the counter (non-prescription) medications, herbal remedies or alcohol with prescription medications.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Using someone else’s medications.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Not being sure what medications you are taking, how many you should take, and why you need to take them.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Using outdated medication.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Your doctor may not be aware of all the medications you are taking.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Your doctor may not be aware of the side effects you have experienced.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;"><i>MYTH: “A pill will cure all ills.” More medication is not always better.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ask your pharmacist about medication side effects and possible drug interactions before taking any medication.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Always use the same pharmacy.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Bring out-dated medications back to pharmacy for disposal.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Never borrow medication from others.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Keep a list of your medications in your wallet or purse and on the fridge.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use a weekly pill reminder / dossett / bubble pack.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ask your pharmacist or doctor before taking any over the counter medications or herbal remedies with prescription medications.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Avoid alcohol when you are taking prescription medications.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Review your medications with your doctor at least every six months and whenever any medication is added or stopped.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Med Info B.C. - A Pharmacist gives seniors information about medications, their use and side effects, free of charge <b>604-822-1330 or 1-800-668-6233</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Seniors Well Aware Program (SWAP); offers information, support groups, withdrawal management, and in home counselling on alcohol and medication use as well as problems related to misuse. <b>24 hours 604-687-7927</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Talk to your local pharmacist about your personal drug profile</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Richmond Alcohol and Drug Action Team (RADAT) <b>604-270-9220</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> North Shore Adult and Seniors Addiction Day Program <b>604-904-6180</b></li> </ul>



# Alcohol Use

What Can Cause Over-use of Alcohol	What you can do	Where to go or Who to Phone
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Using alcohol to aid sleep (alcohol is a central nervous system depressant which disturbs normal sleeping patterns).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Using alcohol to relieve aches and pains (alcohol can cause greater aches and pains).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Loneliness.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sadness or depression</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Grief and loss.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Boredom.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Stressful situations.</li> </ul> <p style="margin-top: 20px;"><i>MYTH: “Alcohol tolerance is the same throughout life”.</i></p> <p style="margin-top: 20px;"><i>In fact, aging decreases your tolerance and can cause major health problems.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Record how much and why you are using alcohol.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Learn about how your body responds differently with age.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Find out whether your feelings are common so you can find healthy ways to deal with them.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Share your feelings with someone you trust such as a family member, friend or senior’s peer counsellor.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> If you are feeling sad or nervous, do not feel like eating, or start losing interest in your activities talk with the community nurse, a counsellor or your family doctor.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Join a community group or activity.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Tell your doctor about your aches and pains and discuss ways to manage the problem.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Talk with societies or groups that are trained to counsel on alcohol misuse.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Kaiser Youth Foundation - Directory of substance abuse services - information for all ages <b>604-681-1888</b> www.kaiserfoundation.ca</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Seniors Well Aware Program (SWAP); offers information, support groups, withdrawal management and in home counselling on alcohol and medication use as well as problems related to misuse. <b>24 hours 604-633-4236</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> ACCESS ONE <b>604-658-1250</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol and Drug Information and Referral Service <b>604-660-9382</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> North Shore Adult and Seniors Addiction Day Program <b>604-904-6180</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Richmond Alcohol and Drug Action Team <b>604-270-9220</b></li> </ul>

# Foot Problems

What Can Cause Foot Problems	What you can do	Where to go or Who to Phone
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Poorly fitting shoes, slippers, boots.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Shoes with high narrow heels, slippery soles, “sticky” soles, no support.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Swollen feet.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Untreated foot problems like calluses, bunions, corns, untrimmed toenails, or ingrown toenails.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Poor or very bad posture.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Loss of feeling in your feet as a result of some diseases e.g. diabetes.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“Those comfortable shoes are now worn out, throw them out.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Wear proper fitting supportive shoes with low broad heels.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Choose supportive shoes that are enclosed around the heels.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Make sure your footwear is in good repair.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Talk with a podiatrist (foot doctor) about calluses, bunions, corns, or ingrown toenails. Corn plasters are not recommended for people with diabetes, heart or blood vessel disease.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> If your shoes are loose and you can’t afford a new pair, buy insoles or wear extra socks.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> DO NOT wear socks on lino or tiled flooring.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> DO NOT walk with your reading glasses on.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Keep your feet up when sitting if they are swollen. Use a pillow underneath feet if lying down to keep feet higher than your hips.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Wear loose socks or stockings. Knee highs can cut off your circulation in your legs and numb your feet.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> For hard-to-fit or specialty fitting footwear, refer to the Yellow Pages, ask your doctor or phone your community health centre.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> BC Association of Podiatrists, local offices and home visits <b>604-602-0400 <a href="http://www.foothealth.ca">www.foothealth.ca</a></b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> For posture problems talk to your doctor, physiotherapist, or occupational therapist.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Diabetic Resource Center of the Canadian Diabetes Association <b>604-732-4636, 1-800-268-4656;</b> Chinese info line - <b>604-732-8187</b> <a href="http://www.diabetes.ca">www.diabetes.ca</a></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mt St. Joseph Diabetes Education for South Asians and Chinese <b>604-321-6151</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> St Paul’s Hospital Diabetes Centre <b>604-806-8357</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> North Shore Diabetes Day Centre <b>604-984-5752</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Richmond Hospital, Diabetic Day Care <b>604-278-9711</b></li> </ul>

# Muscles/Joints

What Can Cause Weak Muscles & Stiff Joints	What you can do	Where to go or Who to Phone
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Lack of physical activity (e.g. sitting too much or staying in bed).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Unresolved injury, pain or discomfort.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Conditions affecting the muscles and joints such as arthritis, osteoporosis, Parkinson's and stroke.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Join an exercise program at recreational centres. (in water or on land)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Join an Osteofit program for helping osteoporosis.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Plan a regular activity such as daily walks.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> See a physiotherapist, kinesiologist, or personal trainer for specialized exercises.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Contact local support groups.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Private physiotherapy clinics are listed in the Yellow Pages. No referral required but you may wish to discuss with your doctor before making an appointment. Some may make home visits. www.bcphysio.org (click: Find a Physio)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Community physical and occupational therapy services in your home for people who are unable to attend outpatient services. <b>See page 26 for listings</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Massage therapists listed in the Yellow Pages.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Arthritis Answers Line Service. <b>604-871-4537</b> (information line) <b>1-800-321-1433</b> (answering machine) <b>604-875-5051</b> (10:00 am - 4:00 pm)</li> </ul>

# Muscles/Joints

What Can Cause Weak Muscles & Stiff Joints	What you can do	Where to go or Who to Phone
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Tight muscles.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Energetic physical exercise.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Talk with your doctor about your discomfort or soreness, what time of day, what activity you are doing, when the discomfort is the worse, and what you do for the discomfort.</li> </ul> <p>It's a good idea to write all the information down and discuss it with your doctor, physiotherapist, occupational therapist, nurse, or kinesiologist.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Arthritis Society of B.C. &amp; Yukon <b>604-879-7511</b> <b>www.arthritis.ca</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Osteoporosis Society of B.C. <b>604-731-4997 or</b> <b>1-800-363-1933</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> B.C. Parkinson's Disease Association. <b>604-662-3240 or</b> <b>1-800-668-3330</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Stroke Recovery Association of B.C. <b>604-688-3603 or</b> <b>1-888-313-3377</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Weakness of muscles controlling flow.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Walking programs in local malls.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Exercise programs for older people: The UBC Changing Aging Program <b>604-822-2505</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Check your local community recreation centre</li> </ul>

# Continence

What Can Cause Changes in Bladder & Bowel Control	What you can do	Where to go or Who to Phone
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Changes in your eating and drinking habits.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Side effects of medications.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Infection.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Prostate problems.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Constipation can contribute to bladder problems.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Avoid beverages that contain caffeine.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Constipation: eat high fiber diet (vegetables, fruit, whole grains), plenty of fluid, and exercise.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Diarrhea: drink plenty of fluids, bland diet (e.g. rice, potatoes, and yogurt).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Drink enough fluids so that your urine is light yellow in colour.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Drinking too little fluids will cause irritation to the bladder and possible urinary tract infection.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Incontinence products for women and men are available at medical supply stores and pharmacies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Dial-A-Dietitian <b>604-732-9191 or 1-800-667-diet (3438)</b> 8:00 am - 5:00 pm Monday to Friday except holidays</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Vancouver General Hospital Physiology Centre (for men and women with incontinence or pelvic pain) <b>604-876-5773</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Continence Clinic, Children's and Women's Health Centre of B.C. <b>604-875-3137</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> If problem is severe get information from a community nurse or family doctor (see Page 26).</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>continued on next page....</i></p>

# Continence

What Can Cause Changes in Bladder & Bowel Control	What you can do	Where to go or Who to Phone
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Weakness of muscles controlling flow.</p> <p><i>MYTH: Along with aging comes loss of bladder and bowel control.</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> For exercises to strengthen muscles that control urine flow, see your doctor, nurse, physiotherapist.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> See your doctor with any changes in bladder and/or bowel control. Tell your doctor about any:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• blood in your urine,</li> <li>• foul smelling urine,</li> <li>• difficulty or pain urinating,</li> <li>• urinary frequency</li> <li>• difficulty getting to the bathroom on time,</li> <li>• constipation or diarrhea</li> </ul> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Go to the bathroom before going to bed.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Uro-gynecology Physiotherapists Private practices PABC Directory <b>604-736-5130</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Canadian Continence Foundation, they will send out information free of charge. <b>1-800-265-9575</b></p>

# Vision and Hearing

<b>What Can Cause Vision Difficulties</b>	<b>What you can do</b>	<b>Where to go or Who to Phone</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Dirty or scratched eye glasses.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> With age, eyes become sensitive to glaring light.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Eyesight prescription has changed.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Getting used to bifocals.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Low lighting causing eye strain.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Diseases of the eye such as cataracts, glaucoma, infections.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Diseases that affect eyesight such as diabetes.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Eye strain when watching the TV or using the computer for too long.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Clean glasses regularly. Use a non-glare cleaner and soft cloth.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Wear sunglasses when in the sun.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Wear special glasses that cut down on the glare.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Pause and give your eyes time to adapt to changes in light or give them a rest by looking up from what your doing.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use good lighting in halls, stairways, bathrooms.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use night lights.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Maintain good diabetic control.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Bifocals; do not look through lower part of glasses when going up or down stairs. Bend your head to use upper part of glasses.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Remove reading glasses when walking.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Check your eyesight at the optometrist or ophthalmologist once a year.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Canadian National Institute for the Blind, a service for people who have trouble seeing. <b>604-431-2121 or 1-800-888-9090</b> <b>www.cnib.ca or 1-866-246-2642</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Diabetic Resource Center of the Canadian Diabetes Association provides information and support for people with diabetes. <b>604-732-4636 1-800-268-4656</b> Chinese Information Line: <b>604-732-8187</b> 10:00 am - 3:00 pm Monday - Friday www.diabetes.ca</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> BC Association of Optometrists <b>604-270-9909</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mt St. Joseph Diabetes Education for South Asians and Chinese <b>604-321-6151</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> St. Paul's Hospital Diabetes Centre <b>604-806-8357</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> North Shore Diabetes Day Centre <b>604-984-5752</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Richmond Hospital, Diabetic DayCare <b>604-278-9711</b></li> </ul>

# Vision and Hearing

What Can Cause Hearing Difficulties	What you can do	Where to go or Who to Phone
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Wax build up in ear.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Dirty hearing aids or old batteries in hearing aids.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Inner ear problems.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Injury to the head (e.g. fall)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Make sure your ears are clear of too much wax.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Clean your hearing aids often and check batteries regularly.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> In a public place, choose to sit in the corner to reduce excess noise.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Contact resources for further information such as the Western Institute for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> See your family doctor.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Western Institute for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing trained staff give advice and hearing tests. The centre also has recycled hearing aids and special equipment. <b>604-736-7391 or 1-888-736-7391</b> <b>www.widhh.com</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Island Hearing Services Assoc. clinic for hearing assessment counselling. <b>1-800-563-4327</b> <b>www.islandhearing.com</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Greater Vancouver Assoc. of the Deaf TTY <b>604-738-4644</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Canadian Hard of Hearing Assoc. B.C. Chapter <b>Voice/TTY</b> <b>604-795-9238 or 1-866-888-2442</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> St Paul's Audiology Dept. <b>604-806-8660</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Speech and Hearing Clinic Richmond Health Services <b>604-233-3188</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Minoru Place Activity Centre Minoru Place Senior's Centre <b>604-718-8450</b></li> </ul>



# Sleep Difficulties

What Can Cause Difficulties with Sleeping	What you can do	Where to go or Who to Phone
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Lack of physical activity.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Poor sleeping environment.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Lack of sunlight.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Having coffee, tea, cola, alcohol or chocolate in the evening.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Napping in the late afternoon and early evening.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Stress.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Feeling nervous, anxious or worrying.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Grief and loss.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sadness or depression.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Medication and alcohol use.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Normal sleeping pattern for older adults is six hours per night, awoken twice during the night, with 20 minutes to go back to sleep.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> If you can't sleep after 20 to 40 minutes, get up and do something like read a book or listen to music.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Avoid caffeinated foods and drinks after 4 pm, try warm milk instead.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Do not nap in late afternoon or early evening.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Keep bedroom cool and quiet.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure mattress is firm and comfortable.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Learn relaxation techniques.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> For fitness and recreation programs - Community Centres <b>See listings on page 27</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sleep Disorder Clinic - UBC Hospital. Doctor's referral needed. <b>604-822-7606</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Dial-a-Dietitian. 9:00 am - 5:00 pm Monday - Friday <b>604-732-9191 or 1-800-667-diet (3438)</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health Information Line <b>604-669-7600</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health Services North Shore <b>604-904-3590</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Med Info B.C. Pharmacists give seniors and their families information about medications free of charge. <b>604-822-1330 or 1-800-668-6233</b></li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>continued on next page...</i></p>

# Sleep Difficulties

What Can Cause Difficulties with Sleeping	What you can do	Where to go or Who to Phone
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Age-related intolerance to sleeping pills.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Aches and pains.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Grief and loss.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Increase exercise during the day.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Try to go outside and walk for 20 minutes a day, rain or shine.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Limit alcohol as it reduces the amount of restful sleep you get.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Talk with someone you trust about feeling anxious or sad.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Check with a health care professional, your community nurse, pharmacist or family doctor.</li> </ul>	<p>... see page 15</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Community Health Services/ Grief Counselling Vancouver - <b>604-709-6478</b> North Shore - <b>604-986-7111</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Caring Place (Richmond) <b>604-279-7000</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Partners in Mental Health (Richmond) <b>604-273-9121</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> CHIMO Crisis Service - provides free services to Richmond, Tsawassen, and Ladner residents who are in crisis. <b>604-279-7077</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Crisis Line - offers counselling assistance 9:00 am - 12:00 am 7 days per week to callers who are experiencing distress <b>604-270-7070</b></li> </ul>

# Concentration Difficulties

What Can Cause Difficulties with Concentration	What you can do	Where to go or Who to Phone
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Chronic pain.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Continually feeling rushed, stressed.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Being afraid of falling.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Poor appetite or not eating properly.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Feeling nervous or anxious.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Slow down, plan ahead, rest when tired, always give yourself more time to get to places or get things done.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Stay active both physically and mentally - <b>Use it or lose it!</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Eat regularly to prevent physical weakness and mental sluggishness.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Write down activities that need to be done during the day. Keep a journal to remind yourself of activities. Put list on refrigerator or near the phone, and always keep it in the same place. Use a calendar with large spaces to note appointments, reminders, etc.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Talk with someone you can trust about feeling anxious or sad.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Peer Counselling for Seniors Vancouver - <b>604-226-5301</b> North Shore Neighbourhood House, Peer Counselling for Seniors <b>604-987-8138</b> West End Seniors Network <b>604-669-7339</b> 411 Dunsmuir - Information and Referral Centre <b>604-684-8171</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health North Vancouver <b>604-904-3540</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Senior's Peer Counselling <b>604-279-7034</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Dial-a-Dietitian. 9:00 am - 5:00 pm Monday - Friday <b>604-732-9191 or 1-800-667-diet (3438)</b></li> </ul>

# Concentration Difficulties

What Can Cause Difficulties with Concentration	What you can do	Where to go or Who to Phone
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Feeling sad, lonely or depressed.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Worrying about poor memory or memory gaps.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Grief and loss.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Medications (e.g. sleeping pills or pills for anxiety).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> “Not exercising your brain” <b>If you don’t use it you lose it!</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Talk with your community nurse or doctor about any recent loss of appetite, loss of interest in activities, difficulty sleeping or sleeping too much, discomfort, or difficulty in remembering things.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mental exercise aerobics, such as playing games, word search puzzles, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Community Health Services/ Grief Counselling Vancouver - <b>604-709-6478</b> North Shore - <b>604-986-7111</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The Caring Place (Richmond) <b>604-279-7000</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Richmond, Partners in Mental Health <b>604-273-9121</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health Information Line <b>604-669-7600</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> CHIMO Crisis Service - provides free services to Richmond, Tsawassen, and Ladner residents who are in crisis. <b>604-279-7077</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Crisis Line - offers counselling assistance 9:00 am - 12:00 am 7 days per week to callers who are experiencing distress <b>604-270-7070</b></li> </ul>

# Shortness of Breath

What Can Cause Shortness of Breath	What you can do	Where to go or Who to Phone
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Smoking.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Lack of physical activity.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Obesity.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Pollution.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Lung, respiratory infections or chronic diseases such as bronchitis, emphysema.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Allergies/asthma.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Heart problems.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Cut down or stop smoking with help from family, friends, doctor, and education programs.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Try to stay away from places where air is polluted (e.g. smoking areas).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Get your annual flu shot and one time pneumonia vaccine to prevent severe respiratory infections.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Gradually get more physical activity, walk a block or join a fitness program.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Eat healthy nutritional meals.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Talk with your doctor or lung specialist about shortness of breath and why it is occurring, when it happens, how it limits your activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Addiction Services: Prevention Source B.C. - they will send you info about tobacco, medications, and alcohol. <b>604-874-8452</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Nicotine Anonymous (smoking support group) - people with smoking problems help each other. <b>604-660-3082</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> B.C. Lung Association: has info and helps people with chronic lung problems. <b>604-731-5864</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Allergy/Asthma Info Assoc. in BC &amp; Yukon. <b>1-877-500-2242</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Allergy/Asthma Info. Assoc.: advice from others with the same problem: <b>1-250-861-6590</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Cardiac Rehabilitation and Risk Factor Management (Healthy Heart Program) VGH: <b>604-875-5389</b> St. Paul's Hospital: <b>604-806-8591</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Chronic Lung Disease Program (COPD) Lion's Gate Hospital <b>604-988-3131</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Heart and Stroke Foundation Vancouver <b>604-736-4404</b> Richmond <b>604-279-7130</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> North Shore Stroke Recovery Centre <b>604-929-5803</b></li> </ul>

# Safety Hazards

What Can Be Hazardous Indoors	What you can do	Where to go or Who to Phone
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Rushing/not paying attention to your environment e.g. rushing to answer the phone</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Loose carpets, scatter rugs.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Clutter (phone/electrical cords, shoes, pet dishes, papers, etc.).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Slippery or wet floors, walkways.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Poor lighting.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Phone and electrical cords are an extreme hazard.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Slipping in tub or shower.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Poor furniture arrangement, e.g. not enough space if using walking aids.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Reaching for high objects.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Uneven walking areas in patios, entrances, garages, sidewalks, and gardens.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Remove or secure loose carpet/rugs</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Install handrails for all stairs inside and outside the house, and grab bars in the bathroom.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use non-slip wax on floors.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Wipe up spills promptly and leave something to remind you a floor is wet.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Fix or mark uneven floors.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use skid-proof or non-slip mats in bathrooms, especially in bathtub.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Keep a night light on that is close to the bathroom, near the bed, and hallways.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use non glare bulbs that are 100 watts or greater.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Store heavier items on lower shelves</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use a cordless phone.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Home repair in Yellow Pages - to tack on carpets, reroute electrical cords.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Telephone retail stores for cordless phone.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Medical suppliers can install grab bars in bathroom and have other safety equipment for the home.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Senior Citizen's Repair Services: For seniors who need help with minor repairs. Pay only for cost of materials and minimum labour <b>604-291-1133</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> VAC, Veterans' Affairs Canada (previously known as DVA). Veterans may qualify for equipment funding. <b>604-666-3776</b> <b>1-800-663-1931</b> <b>1-800-647-1822</b></li> </ul>

# Safety Hazards

What Can Be Hazardous Indoors	What you can do	Where to go or Who to Phone
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Bending over to reach low objects.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Stairs and bathrooms without secure handholds.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Clothing that is too long can trip you, e.g. nightgowns, dressing gowns, baggy pants that drag.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Using step stools.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Floppy ill-fitting slippers, e.g. crocheted slippers.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Pets you may trip over.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Keep all walkways clear of clutter.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Always wear footwear (slippers, shoes) avoid walking in socks / stockings.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Do not stand on ladder, chair, stool. Store items on easy to reach shelves, counter level, or below shoulder height.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Buy a long handled “reacher” at medical supply store.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Take your time, especially when carrying objects.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Change arrangement of your furniture to open up the space, this is especially important if using walking aids.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Watch out for sleeping pets.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Community Health Services for home safety assessment. <b>See listings page 26</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Residential Rehabilitation</li> </ul>	<p>Assistance Program (RRAP): available to low income seniors for home modifications. <b>604-731-5733 or 1-800-639-3938</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Red Cross Medical Equipment Loan Services Vancouver <b>604-709-6639</b> Richmond <b>604-278-4011</b> North Shore <b>604-988-7115</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> South Vancouver Seniors’ Registry - consignment equipment <b>604-324-3670</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Vancouver Masonic equipment loan <b>604-732-5414</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Home Adaptations for Seniors Independence Program (HASI) <b>604-731-5733 or 1-800-639-3938</b></li> </ul>

# Walking Hazards

What Can Be Hazardous Outdoors	What you can do	Where to go or Who to Phone
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Rushing/not paying attention to your environment.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Carrying too much, causing a loss of balance, or blocking vision.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Walking on uneven ground.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Wet leaves, fallen branches on the street.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Snow, ice or water puddles on the street or stairs.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Raised, cracked sidewalks.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Getting on and off buses.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Poor outdoor lighting.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Improper footwear for the type of weather.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Walk slowly and pay attention to your environment.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Avoid carrying heavy items (use a delivery service)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use a portable/folding grocery cart.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use walking aids as ordered for you by a health professional.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Avoid walking on wet leaves, snow or ice. Avoid reaching too far or twisting your back.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Check and replace your rubber cane tip regularly when worn down.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use a waist belt pack or backpack instead of carrying a purse.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Install outdoor lighting using a timer or sensor.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Install handrails on outdoor stairs</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use footwear with low, stable heel and good tread.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Report any hazards (roads or side walks) to City Engineering Departments  Vancouver <b>604-294-7460</b>  Richmond <b>604-276-4000</b>  North Vancouver District <b>604-990-2450</b>  North Vancouver City <b>604-983-7333</b>  West Vancouver <b>604-925-7020</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Phone your local grocery store to ask if delivery service is available.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> For hard-to-fit or specialty fitting footwear: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> refer to the Yellow Pages under “shoes”</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> ask your doctor</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> phone a Community Health Centre</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



# Keeping Your Balance

<b>What Can Affect Your Balance</b>	<b>What you can do</b>	<b>Where to go or Who to Phone</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Getting up too fast.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Lack of physical activity.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Poor vision.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol and/or medication misuse.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Poor footwear.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Not using the correct walking aids.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Lack of sleep.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Not eating enough or regularly.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Medical conditions that affect how your muscles or nerves react.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Medical conditions that affect your inner ear.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Medical conditions such as diabetes and multiple sclerosis can affect your five senses (hearing, sight, touch, smell, taste).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Take your time.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Exercise to improve your balance (see pages 9-10).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use corrective lenses for poor vision (see page 13).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Avoid alcohol (see page 7).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use well fitting footwear (see page 8).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use recommended walking aids, and gradually increase your walking.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Eat regularly well balanced meals to give yourself energy throughout the day.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Talk with support groups such as the Diabetes Association (see page 8).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Talk with your doctor about your medications and medical conditions.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Consider wearing “hip protectors”, padding to prevent breaking your hip. Ask a physiotherapist or occupational therapist.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Community Health Services - Physiotherapy and Occupational therapy <b>See listings page 26</b></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Private physiotherapy clinics are listed in the Yellow Pages. You do not require a referral but you may wish to discuss this with your doctor. <a href="http://www.bcphysio.org">www.bcphysio.org</a> (click: Find a Physio)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Local medical supplier to try out walking aids.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Dial-A-Dietitian - <b>604-732-9191 or 1-800-667-diet (3438)</b> <a href="http://www.dialadietitian.org">www.dialadietitian.org</a></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Look in your phone book for support groups for your medical condition e.g. stroke, parkinsons, diabetes.</li> </ul>

# Talking to Your Health Professional About Your Concerns

Falling, slipping and tripping are not normal. You need to find out why this is happening and how to protect yourself. You know yourself best, so you need to be able to clearly tell your doctor about your problem(s). Trust and comfort are essential for a good patient - doctor relationship. You can do your part by following the suggestions as listed below when speaking with any health professional.

- List your concerns on paper in order of “what is most important” before going to the doctor’s office.
- Make sure you understand what you are asking the doctor to help you with. Be clear.
- When making your appointment, be sure to tell the person who is booking your appointment if you think you will need a longer time to speak with the doctor.
- If you are not clear or unsure about the medical treatment plan, (e.g. tests, medications, therapists) ask that it be written down or re-stated. It is not unusual to forget or not hear everything the doctor tells you because you may be feeling stressed at the time. Go with a friend or translator.
- Don’t be afraid to speak up for yourself. Tell your doctor if “the plan” or “treatment” is not working. Don’t think that maybe it will work eventually.
- Keep a diary of medications and complaints, and take this with you.
- Ask for resources (e.g. brochures, videos).
- Do not stop a medication without consulting a health professional.
- Have someone accompany you to the doctor’s appointment if, for example, you do not hear well or have difficulty understanding information, or feel unsteady on your feet.

# My "First Steps" Plan to Prevent Falls

My greatest risk(s):	I will do:	I have done:	Reviewed at:			
			3 mo	6 mo	9 mo	1 yr
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						

# Community, Recreation and Health Centres

## Community Health Services

### **Vancouver:**

CHA 1	North Community Health Office .....	604-253-3575
CHA 2	Three Bridges CHC .....	604-736-9844
CHA 3	Evergreen CHC.....	604-872-2511
CHA 4	Pacific Spirit CHC.....	604-261-6366
CHA 5	Raven Song CHC .....	604-709-6400
CHA 6	South Community Health Office .....	604-321-6151

### **Richmond:**

Continuing Health Services .....

	604-278-3361
--	--------------

**North Shore:**..... 604-986-7111

## Senior Centres

### **Vancouver:**

411 Seniors Centre/Dunsmuir.....	604-684-8171
Marpole Senior's Place .....	604-266-5301
West End Senior .....	604-669-7339
South Granville Seniors Centre .....	604-732-0812
Minoru Place Seniors Centre .....	604-718-8450

### **North Shore:**

North Shore Seniors' One Stop Information Line  
..... 604-983-3303

#### **North Vancouver:**

Silver Harbour .....

	604-980-2474
--	--------------

Molly Nye House .....

	604-987-5820
--	--------------

#### **West Vancouver:**

Seniors Activity Centre .....

	604-925-7280
--	--------------

## Community Centres

### **Vancouver:**

Britannia .....	604-718-5800
Carnegie Centre .....	604-665-2220
Champlain Heights .....	604-718-6575
Douglas Park .....	604-257-8130
Dunbar .....	604-224-1374
False Creek Centre.....	604-257-8195
Hastings.....	604-718-6222
Kensington .....	604-718-6200
Kerrisdale .....	604-257-8100
Killarney .....	604-718-8200
Kitsilano .....	604-257-6976
Marpole-Oakridge .....	604-257-8180
Mount Pleasant.....	604-713-1888
Ray-Cam Co-Op.....	604-257-6949
Renfrew Park .....	604-257-8388
Riley Park .....	604-257-8545
Strathcona .....	604-713-1838
Sunset .....	604-718-6505
Thunderbird .....	604-713-1818
Trout Lake.....	604-257-6955
West End.....	604-257-8333
West Point Grey .....	604-257-8140

### **North Shore:**

North Vancouver - Recreation Commission	
includes: Delbrook, Karen Magnussen .....	604-987-7529
Lynn Valley, Parkgate, Ron Andrews, Seylynn, William Griffin	
West Vancouver .....	604-925-7270
Glen Eagles.....	604-921-2100

### **Richmond:**

Cambie .....	604-233-8399
Hamilton.....	604-718-8055
Sea Island .....	604-718-8000
South Arm .....	604-718-8060
Steveston .....	604-718-8080
Thompson.....	604-718-8422
West Richmond.....	604-718-8400

**Please Note:** For all other regions in B.C. call your local health centre or check Blue Pages or Yellow Pages for your local YMCA/YWCA.

For more copies, go online at <http://vch.eduhealth.ca> or  
email [pchem@vch.ca](mailto:pchem@vch.ca) and quote Catalogue No. **No.BE.250.F519**  
© Vancouver Coastal Health, December 2003

The information in this document is intended solely for the  
person to whom it was given by the health care team.

[www.vch.ca](http://www.vch.ca)