

Personal Health News ▶ Prevention and Treatment ▶ How To Keep Your Independence Through Assistive Devices

How To Keep Your Independence Through Assistive Devices



Personal Health News

Adopting proper lifestyle habits is key to living a happy and healthy life. From proper nutrition to exercise to home safety to disease awareness and prevention, being informed and proactive is the best approach to living your best life.

PREVENTION AND TREATMENT It's no wonder the fear of falling is a concern for seniors who have grown a little unsteady on their feet — falls are, in fact, the leading cause of hospital admissions for older Canadians.

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Assistive devices can be an important piece of the puzzle when it comes to retaining independence.

Despite this statistic, it's vital you keep active in your later years – paring down your activities might actually increase your chance of falling as you lose strength and flexibility. As Clara Fitzgerald, Director of the Canadian Centre on Activity and Aging, points out, “The number one cause of contractures [abnormal shortening of muscle tissue], muscle weakness and fatigue is inactivity.”

Speak to a specialist

In addition to exercise, assistive devices play a huge role in helping seniors avoid injury and remain independent as long as possible. There's a variety of mobility aids to choose from: everything from canes to walkers or rollators (rolling walkers equipped with a rest bench) to wheelchairs, scooters and stair lifts. If grooming and hygiene is troublesome, raised toilet seats, shower chairs, hand-held showers and grab bars can make the bathroom safer.

“Don't say I'm too proud to use this. It's important if it helps you regain your mobility and participate in everyday life.”

According to Bill Laidlaw, Executive Director of the Canadian Assistive Devices Association, before you buy an assistive device it's essential you find out how to use it properly either by speaking to your physician, occupational therapist (OT) or local home health care store that specializes in mobility aids.

For instance, in the case of a walker, make sure it is the right height and that you know how to use the brakes. If you are worried about the expense, your OT can inform you of relevant funding programs. (In Ontario, for example, some mobility aids are covered by the provincial Assistive Device Program which will cover 75 percent of the cost.)

Exercise is still important

Fitzgerald notes that using a mobility aid does not preclude you from exercising. She advises using the device “to its full potential,” avoiding, say, spending more time on a rollator's rest bench than using it for walking. For his part, Laidlaw cautions seniors against letting their pride get in the way of using an assistive device. “Don't say I'm too proud to use this. It's important if it helps you regain your mobility and participate in

everyday life.”

KATHERINE O'BRIEN, ca.editorial@mediaplanet.com

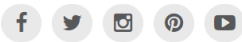
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