

How to prevent falls due to slips and trips?

Both slips and trips result from some a kind of unintended or unexpected change in the contact between the feet and the ground or walking surface. This shows that good housekeeping, quality of walking surfaces (flooring), selection of proper footwear, and appropriate pace of walking are critical for preventing fall accidents.

Slips

Slips happen where there is too little friction or traction between the footwear and the walking surface. Common causes of slips are:

- wet or oily surfaces
- occasional spills
- weather hazards
- loose, unanchored rugs or mats
- flooring or other walking surfaces that do not have same degree of traction in all areas



Trips

Trips happen when your foot collides (strikes, hits) an object causing you to lose the balance and, eventually fall. Common causes of tripping are:

- obstructed view
- inadequate lighting for the task
- clutter in your way
- wrinkled carpeting
- uncovered cables
- bottom drawers not being closed
- uneven (steps, thresholds) walking surfaces



Other Causes

Work environment: Poor lighting, glare, shadows, bulky or awkward personal protective gear, excessive noise, horseplay, distractions and poor housekeeping.

Human factors: Eyesight, fatigue, medications, stress, age, physical state, illness, alcohol, drugs, carrying a load outside of your capabilities.

Injuries are often sprains, strains, bruises, contusions, fractures, cuts and may result in a disabling injury that can affect you for the rest of your life!



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What can you do?

Good housekeeping is the first and the most important (fundamental) level of preventing falls due to slips and trips. It includes:

- cleaning all spills immediately
- marking spills and wet areas
- mopping or sweeping debris from floors
- removing obstacles from walkways and always keeping them free of clutter
- securing (tacking, taping, etc.) mats, rugs and carpets that do not lay flat
- always closing file cabinet or storage drawers
- covering cables that cross walkways
- keeping working areas and walkways well lighted
- replacing used light bulbs and faulty switches

Without good housekeeping practices, any other preventive measures such as installation of sophisticated flooring, specialty footwear or training on techniques of walking and safe falling, will never be fully effective.

Each fall circumstance is different with often many contributing factors. The following provides some general directions to help avoid a slip or fall:

- Don't be in a hurry! Be careful, don't rush or take shortcuts, evaluate walking surfaces carefully and always use caution especially during winter months.
- Don't be distracted and focus on the task until it is completed.
- Use railings or other stable objects when available, especially when on stairs.
- Wear high traction footwear that works best for the conditions you will be in.
- Balance the load that you are carrying.
- Fully wipe your shoes and boots on floor mats.
- Get better lighting where needed.
- Enter and exit your vehicle slowly, holding onto the door and steering wheel while stepping onto or off of a slippery surface.
- Report poor conditions as soon as you can, so that others can be warned or that affected areas can be corrected.

