

## FACT SHEET

# Feet and Footwear for Older Adults

## Footcare and safe shoes can prevent falls

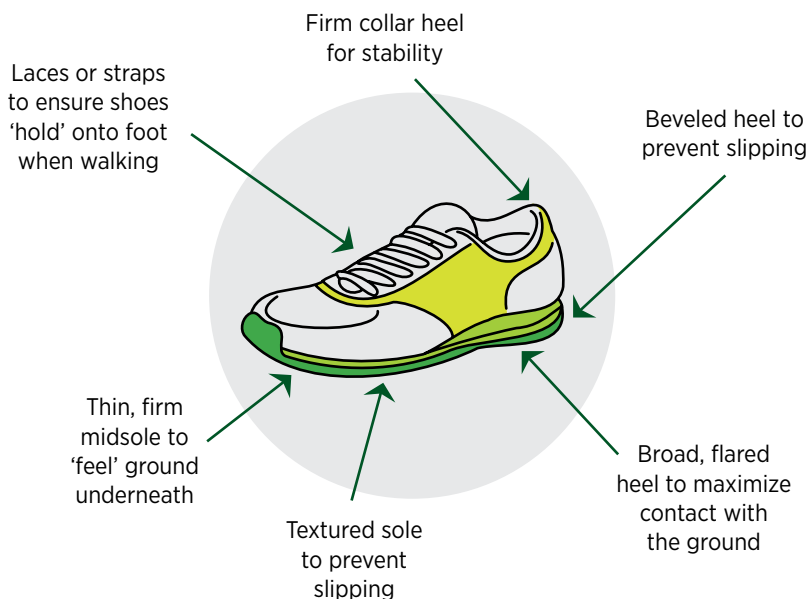
Falls are the leading cause of injury for older adults (ages 65 and older) and can have serious consequences, like limited mobility and loss of independence. Routine care for feet and proper supportive footwear can reduce your risk of falls.

### What foot problems are associated with falls?

Foot related risk factors that increase fall risk:

- ▶ Increased foot pain
- ▶ Reduced flexibility in ankle joint
- ▶ Reduced calf muscle strength (the muscle that helps you rise on the balls of your feet)
- ▶ Reduced sensation resulting from neuropathy (nerve damage)
- ▶ Presence of a bunion (hallux valgus deformity) or toe deformities

### What makes a shoe safe?



## Footwear Tips

### Health Tips

- Your healthcare provider or podiatrist can check your feet and determine if there are issues that increase your risk of falling. Podiatrists diagnose and treat foot conditions.
- Ask your healthcare provider to check your feet once a year.
- See a podiatrist if you have foot problems, such as toe or foot deformities or foot pain.
- Work with a physical therapist to learn exercises to increase strength and flexibility of foot and ankle.

### Safety Tips

- Always wear properly fitted shoes inside and outside your home.
- Wear sturdy shoes with low heels, traction, and strong arch and heel support.

**Working with your healthcare provider or podiatrist to address foot problems and using appropriate footwear can reduce your risk of falling.**



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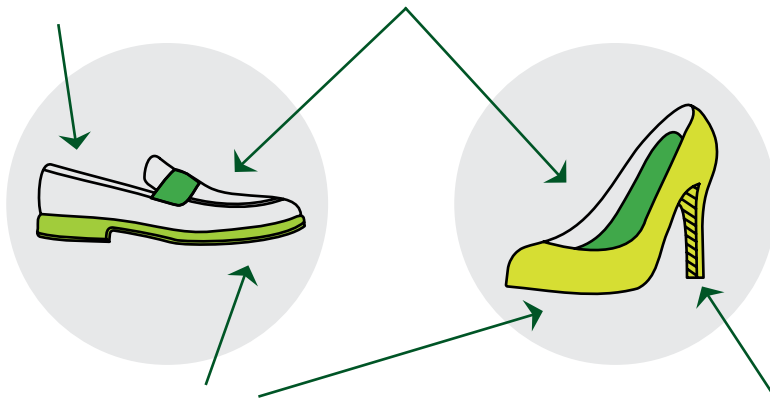
STEADI Stopping Elderly Accidents,  
Deaths & Injuries

[www.cdc.gov/steady](http://www.cdc.gov/steady)

## What makes a shoe unsafe?

Soft or stretched uppers allow the foot to slide around in the sole

Lack of laces means the foot can slide out of the shoe



Slippery or worn soles are a balance hazard, particularly in wet weather

Avoid high heels (more than 1 inch), especially ones with narrow heels

## Examples of appropriate shoes to reduce risk of falls



## Safety Tips

- Avoid walking in only socks inside and outside your home.
- Avoid wearing shoes with heels over one inch, with no ankle support, or with a smooth sole.
- Avoid wearing shoes with no back (such as a mule or clog) or strappy back (such as a slingback).

## Footwear Tips

- Shop for shoes later in the day to ensure a proper fit.
- Have your feet measured to ensure appropriate shoe width and length.
- Accommodate foot deformities such as bunions or hammertoes by choosing shoes with a wide toe box.
- Consider a pedorthist, a specialist in footwear and devices, for footwear and orthotic recommendations to provide the best possible support for walking. See [www.pedorthics.org](http://www.pedorthics.org) for a searchable directory of credentialed pedorthists.