



Six steps to the reduce risk of slips, trips, and falls

STEP 1 Wear sensible shoes

To prevent slips and falls, a high coefficient of friction (COF) between the shoe and walking surface is needed. A COF of 0.5 or more is needed for excellent traction. On icy, wet, and oily surfaces, the COF can be as low as 0.1 with shoes that are not slip resistant.

To put these figures in perspective, a brushed concrete surface and a rubber heel will often show a COF greater than 1. Leather soles on a wet smooth surface, such as ceramic tile or ice, may have a COF as low as 0.1. Stiletto heels, flip-flops, shoes with taps on the heels, and/or shoes with leather or other hard, smooth-surfaced soles frequently lead to slips, falls, and injuries.

STEP 2 Remove hazards

- Remove obstacles from walkways.
- Secure loose rugs with double-faced tape, tacks or slip-resistant backing.
- Repair loose wooden floorboards and carpeting right away.
- Immediately clean spilled liquids, grease or food.
- Use proper floor-cleaning methods.
- Use nonskid floor wax.
- Keep exterior walkways free of snow, ice and other debris.
- One of the most dangerous situations is a rapid change in the friction coefficient of the flooring material; use signage or consider changing the flooring material.

STEP 3 Inspect walkways; report and repair hazardous conditions

- Inspect all walkways, stairs, parking areas, and sidewalks. Slip and fall accidents most often occur where there is a transition: from dry to wet, or one type of flooring to another.
- Report all hazards immediately.
- Follow-up to ensure all repairs are completed in a timely manner.

STEP 4 Use assistive devices

- Use handrails on both sides of stairways and ramps.
- Attach nonslip treads on bare-wood steps.
- Ramps should be constructed to have a different texture from the floors around them.
- Place non-slip mats around entrances that may become wet or slippery.

STEP 5 Light up your space

- Provide adequate lighting for best visibility. Night time lighting should be used to assure that all walkways are illuminated, without shadows.
- Replace burned-out lightbulbs and faulty switches.
- Exercise care when moving from light to dark areas, or vice versa.
- Clear the paths to light switches that aren't near room entrances.
- Consider installing glow-in-the-dark or illuminated switches.

STEP 6 Keep moving

If you aren't already getting regular physical exercise, consider starting a general exercise program.

Consider activities such as walking or other aerobic activity, strength training, or any regular exercise routine. Such activities reduce your risk of falls by improving your strength, balance, coordination, and flexibility. Be sure to get your doctor's approval before starting a new exercise.

For more information on this topic, please visit CIRMA's Slips and Falls Prevention page at CIRMA.org or contact your CIRMA Risk Management Consultant.



WORKPLACE SAFETY WORKS