

# WHAT TO DO WHEN SOMEONE FALLS



This video shows a typical situation in which a man trips over a rug and falls. If you were his caregiver, what would you do first? Most people would probably say, “I’d help him get up.” But, as the video explains, that’s the wrong answer. This is the right answer:

## Check for Serious Injury

- > Don’t move the person or help him get up until you’ve checked for injury.
- > If slight pressure on an arm or leg causes pain, there may be a fracture. Call 911 for help.
- > Other reasons to call 911: if the person is not breathing, has lost consciousness or is confused, or you can’t stop the person’s bleeding by putting pressure on the wound.
- > If you call 911, the dispatcher will ask you questions about the person’s condition, so be prepared to describe what is happening.
- > Keep a list of emergency contacts in your cell phone or on a sheet of paper posted in a visible spot.
- > Until help arrives, cover the person with a blanket, stay calm, and be reassuring.

## Getting Up When There Is No Serious Injury

- > Make sure the person leans against a sturdy piece of furniture for support, not something that will roll or move, like an end table or bookcase.
- > Tell the person to use his or her strong leg to push against the furniture to stand.
- > Make sure the person rests until he or she has recovered from the physical and psychological shock of falling.

## Preventing Falls and Following Up after a Fall

This video shows what to do (and what not to do) right after a person falls. It’s also important to think about what to do to prevent falls and why you should check with a health care provider after a fall.

- > To prevent falls, follow the suggestions in the video “[Preparing the Home for Safe Mobility.](#)”
- > Falls can happen for lots of reasons, such as medication side effects, vision or balance problems, and more. Check with a doctor, nurse, or physical therapist to see if there are reasons a person may be likely to fall again.
- > And remember: Take care of yourself; you can be injured just by trying to help someone who has fallen.

## Additional Resources

- > The United Hospital Fund’s Next Step in Care brochure, [Emergency Room Visits: A Family Caregiver’s Guide](#), offers advice about when to call 911 and what to tell the dispatcher. The guide is available in English, Spanish, Chinese, and Russian.
- > See [8 Things to Have the Doctor Check after an Aging Person Falls](#) for a geriatrician’s advice.
- > For veterans and caregivers of veterans, visit [www.caregiver.va.gov](http://www.caregiver.va.gov) or call 1-855-260-3274 for more information about resources and support.
- > For older adults who use public transportation services, the National Center for Senior Transportation developed a [Falls Awareness brochure](#) that is useful for older adults, caregivers, and family members.

AARP Public Policy Institute

Prepared by Carol Levine, United Hospital Fund