BLADDER HEALTH

Bladder urgency, nighttime bathroom trips, and falls

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If you often rush to the toilet, or get up two or more times a night to use the bathroom, your fall risk is higher. Urgency, leaks, and nighttime trips are treatable, and they are worth raising with your doctor. A few small changes also make each trip safer.

Why bathroom trips lead to falls

Several risks pile up on the way to the toilet:

- **Rushing.** When you have to go now, you move fast and stop watching your feet.

- **Waking up groggy.** The walk from bed to toilet is the highest-risk trip of the day. You are half asleep, it is dark, and your glasses may be on the nightstand.
- **Standing up too fast.** Blood pressure can drop when you stand, causing lightheadedness.
- **Wet floors.** Urine on the floor is a common cause of slips.
- **Medicines.** Water pills (diuretics) can cause dehydration and blood pressure drops. Some bladder medicines have anticholinergic effects that can cause confusion.

Bathroom trips are such a big factor that about half of injuries in hospitalized older adults are linked to bathroom use.

It's on the fall risk checklist

The CDC's Stay Independent checklist includes "I often have to rush to the toilet." A yes adds a point to your fall risk score. Getting up two or more times a night to urinate (nocturia) is a recognized fall risk factor.

In 2025, the American Geriatrics Society recommended adding bladder health to the CDC's fall prevention program. Some clinicians use a short screen called the Three Incontinence Questions to start the conversation.

What to tell your doctor

Bladder problems can feel embarrassing to bring up, but they are common and treatable. Before your visit, keep notes for a few days:

- How many times you get up at night
- How often you have to rush, and whether you leak
- Whether you feel dizzy when you stand up
- What else wakes you, such as pain, snoring, or a partner's sleep problems

Bring a full list of your medicines and supplements. Ask, "Could any of these be adding to my bathroom trips or my dizziness?" Never stop a water pill or any other medicine on your own; your doctor or pharmacist can tell you what is safe to change.

Cutting back on fluids to avoid trips can backfire, because dehydration is a fall risk factor too. Ask your doctor how much to drink and when.

Stand up in stages

Staged rising gives your blood pressure time to catch up:

1. Before you get up, pump your ankles about 20 times.
2. Sit on the edge of the bed for a moment.
3. Stand, and keep your feet moving in place before you walk.

If you feel lightheaded, sit back down. The CDC's Postural Hypotension brochure (PDF) explains more.

Make the trip shorter and safer

You do not have to rebuild the bathroom. Start here:

- **A bedside commode** for nights when urgency is bad, so the trip is a few steps instead of a hallway.
- **Shoes or non-slip slippers by the bed,** plus your glasses and phone on the nightstand.
- **Grab bars by the toilet,** installed into studs, never suction cups. See What grab bars do I actually need in the bathroom?
- **A raised toilet seat or toilet safety frame** if getting up from the toilet is hard.
- **A contrasting toilet seat and a toilet bowl night light** so you can see the target in low light.
- **A non-slip mat,** and clean up any spills or accidents right away.

Lighting the full route from bed to bathroom matters most of all. Our article How do I prevent falls at night? walks through night lights, motion sensor lights, and the nighttime path step by step.

For adult children

If your parent has started leaking or rushing, they may be hiding it, or quietly drinking less to avoid trips. Bring it up gently and frame it as staying safe and independent. A doctor visit, a few small products, and a well-lit route can make a real difference.

How Home Safety Solutions can help

An in-home safety visit walks the actual route from your bed to your toilet, at the height and speed you move. We check lighting, transfers, flooring, and grab bar placement, then give you a prioritized plan and notes for your doctor. Learn what happens during a home safety visit. Call (813) 365-9171 or email info@homesafety.solutions.

Related reading: How do I prevent falls at night? · What grab bars do I actually need in the bathroom? · CDC Postural Hypotension brochure (PDF) · HealthinAging: medications and older adults · Is it normal to fall as you get older?

This article is general education, not medical advice. Talk with your doctor, pharmacist, or therapist about your own situation.

Want a plan for your own home?

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