

 This file includes reports from  
Bob Myers: comments.  
mobility, Balancing, and  
Devices

Sam Francis ('64)  
Experiences and  
Advisories

Misc fallings reported  
by members of Y63

Scroll to next page to view  
contributions >

## Robert Myers, M.D. ('63) : Falls - Prevention and Mobility

A note forwarded to Guy from Sam Francis ('64) contains an excellent list of "*do's*" to prevent falls. This list could not have been more timely. ([yale63.org/samfrancis.htm](http://yale63.org/samfrancis.htm))

Balance is critical. To Sam's forwarded list of do's I would add **a)** no scatter rugs to trip on and **b)** try to engage in exercise of hamstring muscles to strengthen rising from a sitting position.

Anyone with a fall predisposition should not let some figment of personal pride prevent them from having some in-house or outdoors walking assistance. One may Google and search for "fall prevention: simple tips to prevent falls" or "syncope" at the [mayoclinic.org](http://mayoclinic.org), [yalemedicine.org](http://yalemedicine.org) site, or at one's preferred health information website.

On following pages, five photos of devices that those with a balance problem may find useful in active fall prevention and increased mobility. The Veloped (see below) has been a life-saver for my wife, Emily, who can walk a mile on our Halls Mill Road that includes a hill.

Best all,

Bob

email: [myers.robert@mayo.edu](mailto:myers.robert@mayo.edu)

Images (5) on next pages:

## Devices for balance and mobility

Walker with 5" wheels + tennis ball covers on back legs



Nova Zoom Walker (Rollator) with 22" seat: \$60.00  
Medicare Prescription: 8" wheels, front & back.



Trionic VELOPED Sport-12" wheel model with 4 inflatable tires is recommended for folks with body height 4'11" to 6'2". For those taller than 6'2" the larger 14" wheel model accommodates and is recommended.



VELOPED handle adjustment is simple and secure with snaps on each side to loosen and tighten.



4-legged cane for walking in basement to use treadmill.





Member of the Yale '63 Family,  
I'm forwarding some timely reflections from Sam Francis  
of the Yale Class of 1964

Guy

From: Sam Francis, Yale Class of 1964  
Sent: Thursday, April 4, 2024 1:32 PM  
To: Struve, Guy Miller  
Subject: Dangers of falls  
An email from Sam Francis, Yale '64

### **Dangers of falls**

April 4, 2024

To the Class of 1964:

After the sad and sudden death of Joe Lieberman due to complications from a fall (see Joe's In Memoriam page), there has been a flurry of classmate email correspondence regarding the prevalence and dangers of falls among us. Joe's death is a cautionary tale, as was classmate Dennis Upper's death 5½ years ago when he fell down a flight of 13 stairs and died the next day (see his In Memoriam page). Because I'm an EMT on an ambulance squad, I was urged by some of you to communicate some thoughts on the subject.

As an EMT dealing with medical emergencies of all kinds, I'm well sensitized to the dangers of falls, which are the most frequent cause of ambulance dispatches in my town by more than a factor of two over the next most frequent emergencies (motor vehicle crashes, breathing difficulties). More than a third of seniors in our age bracket report a fall in the last year, and half of those seniors report multiple falls. These statistics are undoubtedly lower bounds on the problem, because such incidents are generally under-reported. In short, falls are not just something that happens to other people, and are nothing to take lightly.

Some of my dispatches turn out to be simply lift assists for patients who have fallen and can't get up. But at our age, falls can have very serious consequences, due to osteoporosis and other frailties, with risks exacerbated if you are on a blood thinner, as many of us are for atrial fibrillation. Head trauma can lead to subdural hematoma (internal bleeding), the deadliest of head injuries. Hip fracture from a fall is common and often devastating, with 50% of geriatric patients with a hip fracture dying within six months.

What can you do to keep from falling? Most precautions are quite obvious, once you stop to think about it.

- # Develop a healthy fear of falling, even if you've never fallen. It only has to happen once, as Joe's and Dennis' stories attest.
- # Install and use grab bars in your shower and bath.
- # Install and use railings on your staircases, preferably on both sides. And install free-standing handrails for your outside steps.
- # Be obsessively careful when climbing or descending stairs, watching each step (literally), particularly when going downstairs. Don't ever carry anything with two hands. Keep one hand free and grip the railing.
- # Stay off ladders and stepstools unless you can brace yourself. Let someone else clean the gutters.
- # Stay well clear of icy surfaces.
- # Consider investing in a medical alert device and wear it all the time, even in the shower. This is particularly important if you live alone. An Apple watch or smartphone may serve much the same purpose, allowing you to call for help, but you're unlikely to take those devices into the shower with you..
- # Exercise for half an hour most days of the week, for strength and balance. And don't sit in one position for long periods. Stretch and walk around at least once an hour.



# If you have balance issues, use a cane.

My experience is that most 9-1-1 fall victims can't tell you why they fell, which means they weren't paying close attention to where they put their feet. And if they don't know why they stumbled, it's difficult to prevent a recurrence.

Be careful out there. And I'll see you in New Haven next month!

(Register here for the reunion.)

Best wishes,

Sam Francis

sfrancis@fast.net



Be goeth before the fall !!

Suggested web content at [mayoclinic.org](http://mayoclinic.org), [clevelandclinic.org](http://clevelandclinic.org), or [yalemedicine.org](http://yalemedicine.org) >> falls, assessment, syncope, statistics for the over 70's

Compiled list of falling events reported by Classmates:

I fell face first down a flight of stairs recently.

Tripped on my Birkenstocks.

Landed on the wood deck and was able to lay flat and distribute the load.

I did a face plant on the driveway falling off a ladder putting up Christmas lighting.

getting up in Fall 2023 from sitting for a long time = broken metatarsal

uneven sidewalks or items in ones backyard

misjudging final step in descending stairs (with unmarked front edges)

falling due to possible syncope or fainting

loose fitting shoe/slippers/flip-flops - misstep

medication known to cause dizziness

descending stairs but not holding on to railing

fall down a flight of stairs by a retired colleague that I think was related to alcohol and subsequent mis-footing  
stepping on ones long shoe lace

"black" ice - esp. for those in the North

From reported experiences

- reports of falls on stairs
- falls caused by loose fitting footwear, sandals, flipflops, or those with straps
- stepping on long shoe laces
- leg giving out or dizziness when standing up quickly from sitting position
- falls or trippings caused by cords, leashes, or irregular surfaces
- unexpected impacts from removal of tree limbs or branches

Jon Larson and Jim Courtright