

Walking Without Falling

This is the chapter I care about most, because it's about you.

The CDC looked at emergency-room visits across the United States from 2001 to 2006. It estimated that about **86,600 fall injuries a year** were linked to cats and dogs, and **88% of them involved dogs**. Women were hurt about twice as often as men. The highest injury rates were in people aged 75 and older, and so were the highest rates of broken bones.

The CDC also looked at *how* people fell. With dogs, the most common ways were:

- **Tripping or falling over the dog** (about 31%)
- **Being pushed or pulled by the dog** (about 21%)
- **Falling over a pet item**, like a toy or a bowl (about 9%)

And about a quarter of the dog-related falls happened while **walking the dog**. Most happened at or around home.

None of that means you shouldn't have a dog. It means we set up the walk, and the house, so you stay on your feet. The CDC's own advice from that report was to know which situations lead to falls, to recognize that pets and their things can trip you, and to train dogs to behave on a leash, as the AVMA recommends.

SAFETY FIRST

If you've fallen in the last year, feel unsteady, or take medicine that makes you dizzy, talk to your doctor before you change your walking routine, and ask about your fall risk.

Before you leave the house

- 1 **Shoes first.** Sturdy, flat, closed shoes with grippy soles. Not slippers, not sandals.
- 2 **Leash on inside, with the door closed.** Clip the leash on before you open the door, so he can't bolt.
- 3 **"Wait" at the door.** Teach him to sit and wait while you open the door, then you step out first or together, never with him dragging you through it (Chapter 4).