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# Prime Life Times

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June 2015

Volume 3 Issue 6

## Six Treadmill Safety Tips

By Joan Maiden

Using a treadmill is a popular way for older adults to exercise, but is it safe? The recent death of forty-seven year old Silicon Valley entrepreneur, Dave Goldberg, has brought much-needed attention to treadmill safety. Goldberg was working out on a treadmill in the gym at the resort where his family was vacationing when he fell off, hit his head and died from his injuries.

Even though deaths are rare when using a treadmill, last year 24,000 people were treated in the emergency room for treadmill injuries. Many of these injuries can be avoided by taking a few simple precautions.

1) The number one safety feature that is most overlooked is the safety clip. This clip is attached by a cord to the machine's kill switch and will instantly shut the machine down if you lose your footing. Like most people, I never used the safety clip until I was on a machine that mal-

functioned and was thrown off. Fortunately I was not seriously injured, but it convinced me of the importance of always attaching the safety clip.

- 2) Familiarize yourself with the machine. Be sure you know what all of the buttons do. Machines are set up differently and it can be confusing. If you are at a fitness facility, ask the staff to instruct you on the proper use of the machine. That's what the staff is there for.
- 3) If you are working out alone, let someone else in the house know you are working out so they can check on you. If you are home alone, have a way close at hand to contact emergency help. Every older adult who lives alone should have a LifeLine—and actually have it on you, not in another room.



- 4) Avoid distractions and stay focused. Maintaining your balance on a moving surface takes your complete concentration. I've seen people fall off the treadmill while texting, talking on their cell phone and dropping a magazine they were reading and trying to pick it up.
- 5) Stop the machine completely when you do anything that occupies your hand.
- 6) Check with your doctor so you know if the treadmill is a safe way for you to exercise.

A treadmill can be a safe, effective and convenient way to exercise if you follow these simple precautions.

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