

STAIR SAFETY

We use stairs and steps every day and we take them for granted. It seems like a simple task to use a stairway, yet more than six percent of all injuries reported at Yale occur on stairs and steps. The following tips can help minimize the risk of falling when ascending or descending stairs:

- Avoid rushing and distractions. Taking a phone call, reading, and being in a hurry will increase your chance of a misstep or a fall on the stairway.
- Maintain two points of contact as you walk up or down the stairs. Use the railing to steady yourself and don't hurry. Take each step one at a time.
- Avoid carrying a load with both hands while going up or down the stairs. Carrying items impacts your ability to hold the handrail, your ability to see the stairs/hazards on the stairs, and your ability to focus on ascending/descending the stairs. Instead, use an elevator to carry heavy or bulky objects to another floor.
- Avoid distractions while walking on the stairs, while standing or walking on a stairway landing, or when using a door that leads to or from a stairway.
- Inspect the stairs and stairway. Pay attention to the tread surface, stair riser, handrails, and lighting. Look for damage and conditions which make the surface slippery such as debris, loose objects, or dirt, water, ice and snow. Report any damage you see or places where there is insufficient lighting in any workplace stairway, indoors or outdoors.
- Take extra care when using stairs entering or exiting a building during cold and wet weather. The temperature difference can cause icing on the entry stairs, and water is often tracked into the building for dozens of feet past the entryway floor matting.
- Know your limitations. If you are feeling rushed and need to carry a heavy or awkward object, pause and consider alternatives such as an elevator, making multiple trips with lighter loads, or asking for help. If you wear glasses, they may alter depth perception. Medications may cause dizziness or drowsiness. Either of these may result in a misstep or trip.
- Ensure your shoes are tied and your clothing does not create a trip hazard.
- Avoid using stairways or landings as a storage place.

