

# SMALL FALLS ARE A BIG DEAL!

the facts on  
preventing falls.



trip

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## CHAPTER 4

# IT'S NOT ONLY THE FALL THAT HURTS... WHAT YOU LAND ON CAN HURT TOO

*Warning...this is a horrible story. A man in his thirties was at his mother's house. He had come to attend his father's funeral. After the funeral he was staying a few extra days to be with his Mom. As he was walking in the kitchen, he tripped. He ended up falling forward on the open door of the dishwasher. A big barbecue fork was somehow sticking up. He landed on it with his face. The fork punctured his eye with enough force, it was driven into his brain, killing him. Another fatality from a same level fall.*

**W**hat are the chances of this happening again? Very slim. But that doesn't matter to the guy it happened to or his Mom — once is enough. Sometimes we think very seriously about falling (this usually happens when we are high up on a ladder or structure and we are scared to death) but we rarely think about what we would land on if we did fall. There is a big difference between falling on your back from six feet (two meters) into the backyard swimming pool with water in it (as long as you don't hit the edge on the way down) and falling the same height from a ladder in the back-



yard and landing on your back or face on the pedal of your child's bicycle. Big difference. In one case you get wet, while in the other the pedal can smash your spine causing spinal cord damage; break your ribs, potentially causing massive bleeding into your lungs; or cause serious facial damage. Same height of fall, but much different outcomes.

We have to be conscious not only of falling, but also of what we would land on. Landing on a piece of rebar that is sticking up on a construction site would be devastating. Landing on that piece of rebar from a three foot fall (one meter) would be enough force to drive the piece of rebar right through you. Landing on a piece of machinery could smash your bones into several pieces. Landing on anything sharp can increase the chances of being seriously injured. You wouldn't have to fall very far for this to happen. A same level fall could do it. Falling from a three foot ladder and landing on your head on just about any kind of surface could finish you off. Always be aware of what's below you.

*Many years ago I attended a farmer who had fallen off his combine during harvest time. He fell only a few feet but landed face first on one of the prongs of the combine that picked up the cut grain stalks. It went in his eye and into his brain. His injury didn't kill him, but he did spend the rest of his life in a nursing home unable to do things we take for granted, like being able to dress ourselves in the morning, go for a walk or have a beer.*

Obviously, concrete is not a good thing to land on. It's so hard. You may think you have a hard head... but it's never as hard as concrete. Striking your head on concrete at 2 1/2 mph could fracture your skull.

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**It's not only the fall but what you land on that hurts.**

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