

Ladder safety tips

Dr. Robert Bassett, Hays Orthopaedic Clinic

Take extra precaution this Fall - to avoid falls - when using your ladder to clean out your gutters or hang Christmas lights. Ladder-related injuries are on the rise, but they can be prevented by following these steps:

- 1) **Inspect the ladder.** Check for any loose screws, hinges or rungs that may need adjusting or replacing. Also, clean off any mud or other liquids that might have accumulated on the rungs.
- 2) **Place ladder on level ground.** Then open it *completely*, making sure all locks are engaged.
- 3) **Always face the ladder when climbing.** Be sure to wear slip-resistant shoes, such as those with rubber soles.
- 4) **Always position ladder close to the work.** Overreaching or leaning far to one side could make you lose your balance and fall.
- 5) **Be careful when climbing.** Ask someone to hold the ladder while you climb. Stay in the center of the ladder as you climb, and always hold the side rails with both hands.
- 6) **Do not step on the top step or the bucket shelf.** The higher you climb on the ladder, the greater the instability.
- 7) **Select the right ladder.** Use a step stool or utility ladder for low or medium heights. For higher areas like gutters, extension ladders are ideal and provide more stability.

*Dr. Robert Bassett is an orthopaedic surgeon with Hays Orthopaedic Clinic. (785) 628-8221.
www.haysortho.com.*