

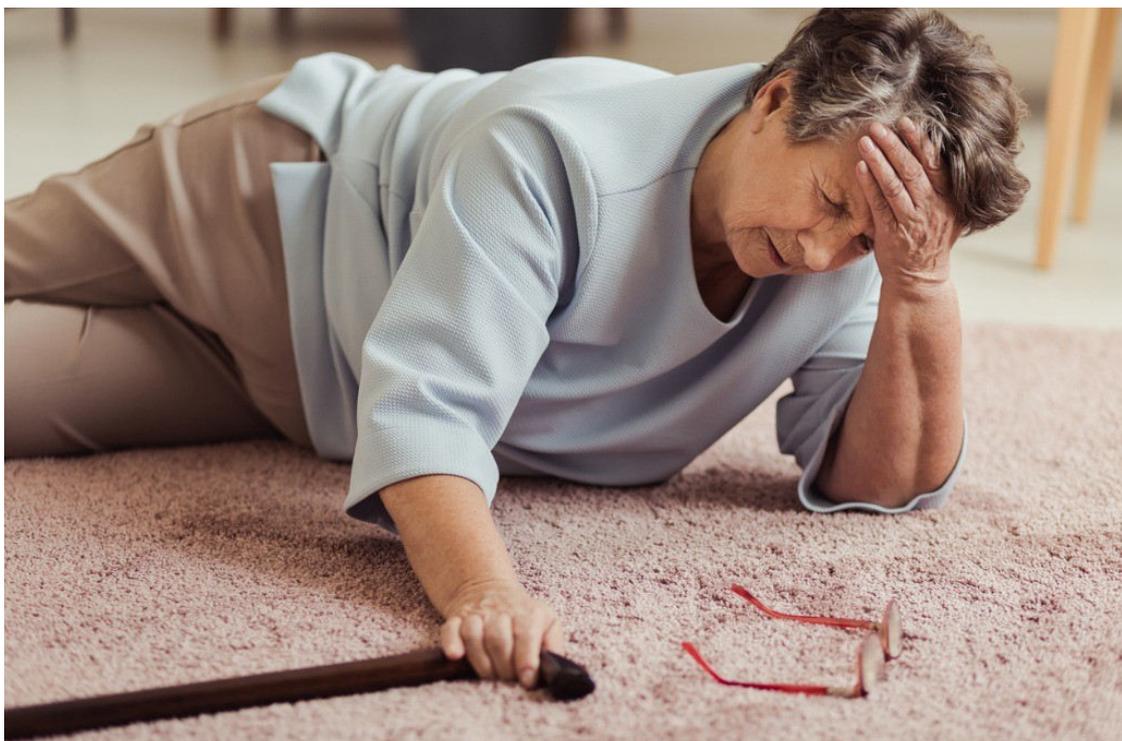
Healthy ageing & lifestyle

Fact Sheet No.10

Falls – Part 1

When you experience a fall it can be very frightening, and even if you are not seriously injured, it will probably leave you feeling shocked and can affect your confidence in a negative way. If you suffer a serious injury, such as a fracture, it could lead to a period of time in hospital and be followed by rehabilitation which will have an impact on your level of independence, temporarily or perhaps even permanently.

There are nearly 12 million people aged 65 and over in the UK (Office National Statistics 2018), and though it is good news that we are living longer, and generally in good health, there tends to be consequences in our longevity; we can't halt our increasing fragility but we can make allowances for it. There is a tendency to be over optimistic about our physical capabilities and this can lead to accidents. So, if the tree needs pruning, consider paying a specialist to do this for you rather than risking a fall.



Where do falls occur?

- At home, particularly on the stairs
- When we go into hospital, where we can easily become disorientated
- In the street, losing our footing on an uneven pavement
- At work
- In the garden e.g. falling on steps, slipping on decking or the patio; especially when wet

Possible contributing factors to falls:

Living alone

Living in 2-storey (or more) accommodation

Dizziness

Low blood pressure

Drugs; some medications can cause dizziness, drowsiness or a drop in blood pressure

Bone fragility, developing osteoporosis

Deteriorating vision and / or hearing

Loss of balance

Poor foot health

Continence problems such as urgency

Mental Health issues such as learning difficulties, dementia

Living with certain physical / neurological conditions such as Parkinson's Disease

Heavy alcohol consumption

What you can do if you fall?

Stay calm while you think through what to do, if you panic you may make the wrong decision and make the situation worse.

Assess the situation, do you feel there are broken bones?

If you feel no bones are broken, take your time and try to sit up.

If you feel able to stand up do so slowly, then if there is something handy which is safe to take your weight, you can use this for leverage. If this is not possible, you can roll onto your hands and knees to help you to get up. Rest for a while before continuing.

If you are hurt, be cautious about moving and try to get attention in any way you can; by shouting, using a personal alarm (if you wear one) or a mobile phone. If you only have a landline phone and can reach it, don't hesitate to dial 999 for assistance.



In the meantime, if you are able to cover yourself up to keep warm this will help.

Hopefully, help will arrive quickly and someone will take control of the situation.

Don't forget to make sure your next of kin are informed.

Top tip

If you are a wheelchair user and are paralysed, take extra care to check your limbs for possible fractures. The signs include swelling, redness, change in shape of the affected limb and pain (if you have sensation).

The next fact sheet will cover Prevention of Falls.

Disclaimer

The information and opinions shared on this website are based on my personal experience of working in the health sector and research I have carried out whilst writing articles; it is of a general nature and should not be used as a substitute for seeking medical advice. My aim is to ensure that this information is accurate and kept up to date, but you should always consult the appropriate healthcare professionals if you have a concern about your health.

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