



Healthy ageing & lifestyle

Fact Sheet No.11

Falls Part 2

Prevention of falls

Statistically, if you are aged 65 and over, you are at a higher risk of falling. Around half of people aged 80 years and over fall at least once a year (Ref: Public Health England), and such falls can result in loss of confidence and subsequently your independence.

If you have already suffered a fall, or are nervous of having a fall, it may be worth devising your own prevention plan and being fully aware of any risk in what you do or are about to do. With that in mind you should think ahead about the tasks you intend to carry out, giving yourself plenty of time so that you do not find yourself rushing about needlessly. If you know something requires your undivided attention and that it is potentially a danger for you, don't put off making the necessary adjustments or getting someone to do it for you.

Top Tips

- Think ahead
- Clear away clutter
- Mop up spillages immediately
- Be tidy
- If you devise your own personal prevention plan don't forget to share this with family and friends so they too are aware of any limitations.
- Never be afraid to ask for help!

Below are areas for consideration on how to prevent falls:

Personal:

Hearing: make sure you can hear what is going on around you. Few people like wearing hearing aids but they will help prevent accidents. Problems of the inner ear can affect your balance.

Eyesight: have an eye test every 2 years, including tests for cataracts and glaucoma.

Strength: keep active to help muscles stay strong, this will help with your balance too; exercise such as Tai Chi also helps with this.

Keep well hydrated and eat small and regular meals to help keep your blood sugar at a constant level, which will help to prevent feelings of dizziness.

Healthy bones are important, make sure you get enough Vitamin D in your diet; seek advice if you are unsure about this.

Feet and Footwear: the right shoes will provide stability to help prevent you falling and also give support to your feet. Avoid wearing socks alone as that can cause you to slip. Certain conditions, such as diabetes and arthritis, can cause problems with your feet and you should see a Podiatrist or Chiropodist for regular checks; your GP may be able to arrange this for you. Also, if you are susceptible to swelling or your feet become sensitive, you may need special footwear e.g. shoes with Velcro straps. Foot pain that becomes persistent must be investigated.

Medication: Your GP should contact you for a (yearly) review of your prescribed medication. This may be carried out over the phone but is more likely to require a visit to the surgery; this will give you the opportunity to report any changes to your GP.

Continence: particularly if you suffer from urgency.

Equipment: over time you may need to adapt the equipment you use for mobility e.g. a walking stick will help with your balance and confidence or you may consider using a wheelchair in order to prevent fatigue, reduce pain in your upper limbs and be safe when out and about.

Phone: If you have a mobile phone, remember to keep it charged and payment up to date; and keep it with you for emergencies!

Personal alarm: Invest in a personal alarm, which can be a necklace or bracelet.

Grabbers: Place objects you use regularly within easy reach and use a 'grabber' to reach objects that are more difficult to get at.

Alcohol: If you have been drinking alcohol take special care or ask someone to get you safely home or to bed.

Top Tips

When you are out and about the mobility aids you use will send a message to other people that you have impaired mobility and need some extra space and time.

Take your time, go at your own pace when doing daily tasks and adjust what you do as needs be.

Your home

Stairs: can be a major challenge so try to reduce the number of times you go up and down, and never leave objects on them! Make sure the stairs are well lit and install handrails if necessary; it is useful to know how many runs there are so you can count them on the descent.

Height: of your bed and chairs should be right for you.

Good lighting: is important; a dim light in the hallway at night may help if you have to get up for a visit to the bathroom etc.

Scatter rugs: are a hazard as are trailing wires.

Handrails: in the bathroom can be more than useful; as is a frame around the toilet.

Furniture: Having too much furniture in one room can cause obstruction.

Pets: Be aware that pets can get 'under your feet'.

Home Hazard Assessment

You can request a home hazard assessment if you are concerned that you are at risk of falling: contact your GP or local authority.

Outside areas



Paving slabs and wooden decking can become slippery, especially in winter, and regular power-washing will help to keep the surface clean and safe.

Good lighting.

Handrails where needed e.g. where there are steps.

Raised flower beds will be easier to manage.

Your workplace

You can find useful information on:

- Health and Safety Executive website: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/>

- Access to Work:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-work-factsheet/>

Health check-ups

Keep up to date with health checks, especially those which are specifically related to your condition, plus other areas such as blood pressure and osteoporosis.

Useful organisations

Age UK

This website contains a wealth of useful information on many topics.

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/>

Age UK – Handyperson services

www.ageuk.org.uk/services/in-your-area/handyperson-service

Royal Osteoporosis Society

<https://theros.org.uk/>

Equipment

Personal alarms

Age UK

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/products/mobility-and-independence-at-home/personal-alarms/>

Walking sticks

Aids4Mobility

<https://www.aids4mobility.co.uk/walking-aids/walking-sticks.html>

Crutches

Completecareshop

<https://www.completecareshop.co.uk/mobility-aids/crutches/>

Ramps

Millercare

<https://www.millercare.co.uk/ramps/>

The Ramp People

<https://www.theramppeople.co.uk/>

Rise recliner Chairs

CareCo

<https://www.careco.co.uk/cl-rr/seating.htm>

Disclaimer

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