



Falls

- Understand and prevent -



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Your general health

Why is your health important?

A number of health conditions can affect your ability to move around or make you feel unsteady on your feet. Some examples are dizziness, arthritis, heart problems, depression, stroke, Parkinson's disease and dementia.

Did you know that?

Even short-term illnesses such as the flu or other infections can affect your balance, increasing the likelihood of a fall

Have regular check-ups and talk to your Doctor for advice on how these conditions might affect you.

Tips: To help keep track of your appointments, have a calendar and mark each visit, future appointments and when you are due for the next check-up; 6 months or yearly

Cardiovascular health

Heart problems, stroke, circulatory diseases and high/low blood pressure are all risk factors for falls.

It is important to maintain an optimal cardiovascular health. You can do that by:

- Keeping a healthy blood pressure range
- Following a healthy eating pattern
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Being physically active regularly

Feeling dizzy or faint may increase the risk of losing your balance, tripping and falling. It is most often caused by a sudden drop of your blood pressure, but can also be a sign of an underlying condition.

Did you know that?

Dizziness and/or fainting can be due to dehydration or side effect from your medicines

Your general health

Mental health

As you age, it becomes increasingly important to take care of your mental health and well-being. Certain mental conditions are very common in people aged 65 years and over. Depression, anxiety, sleep disturbances, and cognitive decline are all risk factors for falls.

Did you know that?

Medicines prescribed to manage depression, anxiety and poor sleep, can increase your risk of falling

Increasing your physical activity levels can help manage anxiety, depression or sleep disturbances. Other treatments, such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy or Interpersonal Therapy, can also help. They focus primarily on education, problem solving, goal setting and behaviour change.

Did you know that?

If you're forgetful, the cause might be as simple as sleep deprivation, dehydration or a side effect from your medicine or may be a sign to go see your doctor

When to go to the doctor...

- Frequent forgetfulness
- Unexplained falls or fainting
- Severe depression or anxiety

Bodily health

Arthritis of the lower limbs is an important cause of disability and falls in older adults.

Did you know that?

Arthritis can increase your risk of falls by 2.4 fold

It is important to stay active and keep your joints mobile to avoid locking and stiff joints. Remember to stretch every day!

Incontinence is also a known risk factor for falls. Pelvic floor muscle training is an effective physical therapy treatment for women with stress or mixed incontinence.

Understanding Falls

Why are falls important?

Falls are a major threat to the health and independence of older adults.

Falls are very common in people aged 65 and over with 1 in 3 falling at least once a year!

One in four falls result in injury, some of which can be serious and may need medical attention or hospitalisation, such as a hip fracture. Falls can affect lifestyle choice and independence of older people.

If you have fallen once in the last 12 months, you are more likely to fall again

Did you know that?

- Falls are listed in the top causes of disability world wide?
- Falls are the most common reason for premature admission into an aged care facility?
- Falls are the leading cause of injury related hospitalisation and death in adults aged 65 and over?

What causes falls?

People fall for a variety of reasons, in some cases a number of things can combine to cause a fall.

The reason or causes of falls are known as risk factors. The more risk factors you have, the more likely you are to fall.

Falls can be a sign of poor balance, weak muscles, poor eyesight or another factor that place you at a higher risk of falling.

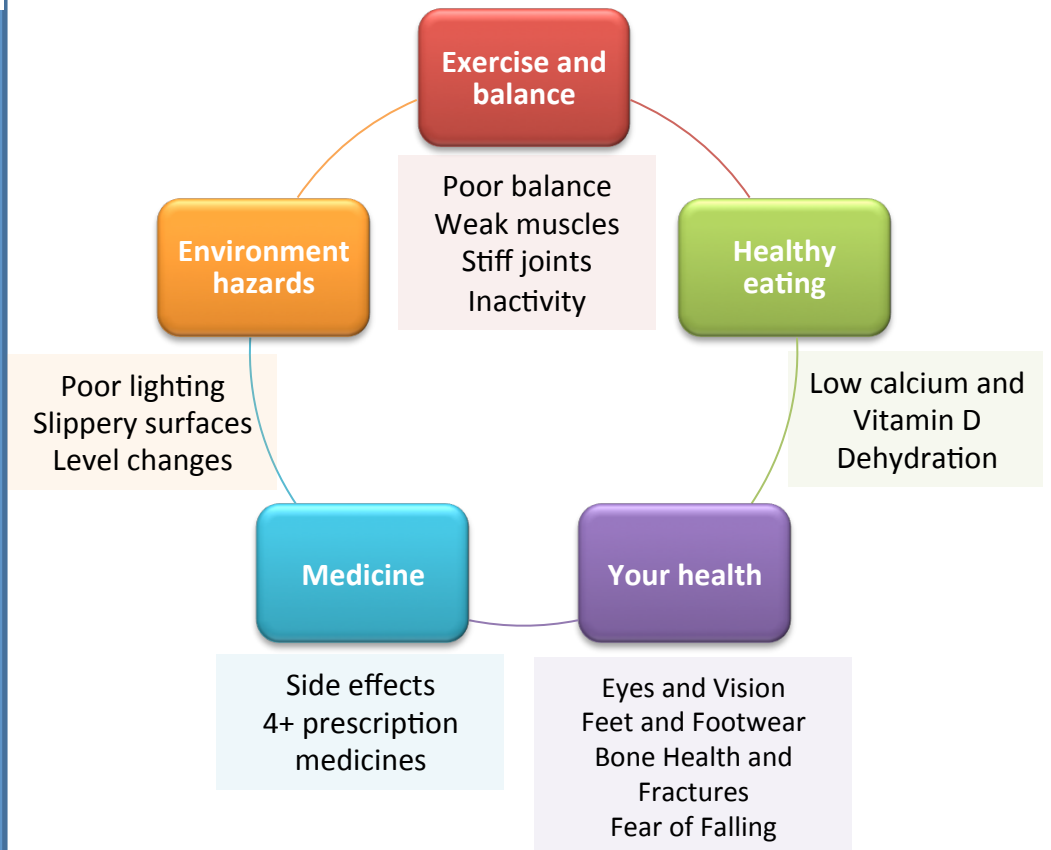
Falls can also be a sign of a new medical problem and should be discussed with your doctor.

Did you know that?

- Most falls occur in a person's own home?
- Many falls do not involve obvious environmental hazards such as a loose rug or a slippery floor?

Understanding Falls

What causes falls: Risk Factors



EMERGENCY PLAN

It is important to have an emergency plan to get help after a fall.

What do we know?

Many falls can be prevented!

By identifying and managing your risk factors, you can reduce or possibly remove your risk of falling again!

Identify your risk factors with the Health & Lifestyle checklist and Home Safety checklist

Even if you do not experience falls now, preventing them in the future is important.

Did you know that?

- Exercising is the most effective action you can take to prevent falls?

Darker skin may require up to six times more sun exposure to produce the same amount of Vitamin D as lighter skin.

Bone health & fractures

Why is your bone health important?

As you age, you gradually lose bone mass and your body is less able to keep your bones healthy and strong. This can eventually lead to osteoporosis if not prevented.

Osteoporosis is a disease where a loss of bone mass makes your bones weak and more likely to break.

The most common fracture sites are the wrist, spine and hip. Those fractures often require hospitalisation and surgery.

Did you know that?

- From the age of 35, you start to lose your bone mass, this occurs more rapidly in women after menopause
- 2-5% of falls result in a fracture
- 90% of hip fractures are caused by falls
- About 75% of hip fractures occur in women

To prevent fractures and breaks, it is important to not only keep your bones healthy, but to prevent and protect against future falls, particularly if you have had multiple falls.

Nutrition

Your diet can influence your bone mass.

It is important to eat a balanced diet with an adequate calcium and vitamin D intake. Being deficient in either calcium or vitamin D can increase your risk of osteoporosis.

As you age, you absorb less calcium from your diet so it is important to include more calcium rich foods and vitamin D into your diet.

Tips:

- Get 6-8 minutes of sun a day for vitamin D by exposing your face, hands and arms
- Reduce your salt, caffeine and alcohol intake to maximise your calcium levels

If you have an insufficiency or are deficient in calcium or vitamin D, ask your doctor or dietitian for a supplement recommendation and/or dietary changes.

Bone health & fractures

Manage your fall risk factors!

The fewer risk factors you have, the less likely you are to fall and fracture or break a bone!



Adapted from
Staying Active and On Your Feet
NSW Government Health
www.activeandhealthy.nsw.gov.au

Exercise:

Weight bearing exercise such as fast walking, jogging, stair climbing, and resistance exercises with free weights are particularly good to make your bones stronger, making them more resistant to fracture or break.

Regular exercise and balance training can also reduce your risk of falling.

Medication

If you have osteoporosis or osteopenia, your doctor may prescribe a medicine if other treatments are not working. These medicines aim to slow the rate of bone thinning and increase bone mass and density.

Hip protectors

Hip fractures are often caused by a fall and can lead to disability, functional impairment and death in older people.

It is important to protect yourself against hip fractures if you are at a higher risk of falls, have had multiple falls or have osteoporosis or osteopenia.

There are two main types of hip protectors:

- The "crash helmet type" consists of plastic guards and diverts the impact of a fall to the surrounding soft tissue
- The "energy-absorbing type" is made of a compressible material and absorbs the impact of a fall

The plastic guards or padding are often worn or sewn into undergarments or pants.

Several different commercially available hip protectors exist:

- *HipSaver*®
- *Safehip*®
- *Stabilo Hip*®
- *ProtectaHip*®

Exercise and Balance

Why is exercise important?

Staying physically active is the single most important thing we can do to stay fit and independent.

As we grow older we lose muscle strength and sense of balance and this can lead to a fall. The more active we remain, the better the chance of keeping our muscles strong, our joints mobile and maintaining our sense of balance.

Staying active reduces our risk of a fall, which helps keep our independence and improves our overall health and wellbeing.

How much activity is enough?

At least **30 minutes a day, five days a week** is recommended, but you should be physically active every day.

The exercise should be brisk enough to increase your breathing and heart rate, although it doesn't have to be so hard that you can't talk.

To keep things interesting, mix up your activities – this will exercise different muscles and helps to keep you interested. You don't have to do your activity all in one go!

- You can break it up into 10-15 minutes twice a day

No matter what your age, weight, health or abilities, you should try to do some form of physical activity every day

Check with your GP before starting any exercise program

Tips:

- Go get your newspaper yourself – don't get it delivered
- Walk to your destination, or if it is a long distance, walk to the next bus stop or get off early and walk the rest of the way
- Take the stairs once in a while
- During ad breaks, get up and walk around your living room

Exercise and Balance

Exercises

To reduce your risk of falling, it is essential to include activities that improve your sense of balance and increase your strength. Try to include balance exercises into your routine **every day**.

Activities which are particularly good for balance include:

- Tai Chi
- Yoga
- Pilates
- Lawn bowls
- Dancing
- Group exercise classes
- Home exercises

It is also important to do activities that get your heart rate up and help build fitness, these include:

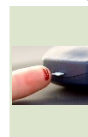
- Aqua aerobics
- Brisk walking
- Golf
- Group exercise classes
- Swimming

Benefits of exercise

There are many benefits of being active:



Helps keep your heart strong and blood pressure down



Helps control your sugar and insulin levels



Helps keep your weight down/off



Keeps your bones strong and healthy – less likely to fracture or break



Increases your energy levels – less likely to feel tired or drained



Helps with sleeping problems



Helps you feel positive and good about life



Helps you feel more confident in your balance

Age is no barrier –
research shows that exercise, at any age, is worth the effort

Keep hydrated
with plenty of
water to avoid
feeling weak
and dizzy.

Healthy Eating

Why is diet important?

Eating healthy food in a balanced diet is very important to help you get the energy you need, maintain good health and have strong bones and muscles.

We all know what healthy food is:

- Wide range of fruit and vegetables
- Some protein sources such as meats, dairy and pulses
- Not too much fatty or highly processed food

When we don't eat enough or eat poorly, we may not have the energy or strength to move around safely or do the things we enjoy. Eating a balanced diet can help boost your immune system to fight infections and keep your bones healthy.

Keeping hydrated with plenty of water is important too.

Did you know that?

- Dehydration is a common cause of older people falling and hurting themselves
- When we don't drink enough water, we can feel weak and dizzy and we are more likely to fall
- Drink at least 6 glasses of fluid a day, preferably water

As we age our bones are more susceptible to becoming fragile and breaking. To keep them strong we need calcium and Vitamin D.

Calcium

Calcium is stored in your bones and essential for many different parts of the body; such as muscles and nerves.

Did you know that?

- When we don't eat enough calcium rich foods, it is taken from our bones to other parts of our body where it is needed!
- As we get older, we absorb less calcium from our food
- If you smoke, drink a lot of caffeine and soft drink, and eat a lot of meat, you absorb **less** calcium from your diet

Healthy Eating

Calcium

The recommended intake is 1300mg per day.

Milk, yoghurt, cheese, salmon, sardines, tahini, figs, almonds and brazil nuts are all good sources of calcium.

Bread, cereals, fruit and green vegetables such as broccoli and bok choy also have calcium, although not as much.

The menu on the left is an example of a typical day's eating that would help you reach the recommended intake of calcium (1300mg per day).

Breakfast: Toast or muesli plus a tub of low fat yoghurt

Lunch: Wholemeal sandwich with cheese, chicken and salad

Dinner: Pasta or rice with tinned salmon or tuna and vegetables such as peas, broccoli and carrots

- Snacking on fresh or dried fruit, cheese, and nuts and a glass of milk/soy milk each day will make up the rest

Vitamin D

Vitamin D is very important for strong bones as it helps us absorb calcium from our diets.

Being low in vitamin D can affect your muscle strength and play a part in osteoporosis.

You get vitamin D through your diet and sunlight.

Examples of vitamin D rich foods are milk, oily fish (salmon and mackerel) and eggs.

Sunlight is another way of getting vitamin D:

- The sun acts on our skin and converts it to vitamin D
- Try to expose your face, hands and arms for **6-8 minutes** of sun a day

Did you know that?

- Darker skin may require up to six times more sun exposure to produce the same amount of vitamin D as lighter skin

If you have an insufficiency or are deficient in calcium or vitamin D, ask your doctor or dietician for a supplement recommendation and/or dietary changes.

Your Health: Vision

Why is your vision important?

Vision can change rapidly when we get older, as our eyes :

- Take longer to adjust to sudden changes in light and dark
- Are more sensitive to glare
- Are less able to judge distances and depth

This affects our ability to see edges of stairs and steps, react to obstacles and keep our balance.

Did you know that?

From the age of 40, our eyesight gradually worsens. By 65, we need three times more light to see

Glasses

Multifocal glasses increase the risk of falling. The change in the lens can make it difficult to judge distances or edges and see objects on the ground.

Consider having two separate pairs of glasses:

- A pair of reading glasses or multifocal glasses for up close activities and activities like driving
- A separate pair of single lens distance glasses for walking and outdoor activities

Research has shown that the use of single lens distance glasses while walking outdoors can reduce falls by **40%**.

Remember to keep your glasses prescription up-to-date. Having your eyes and glasses checked every 1-2 years will help you see more clearly.

Tips:

- Always keep glasses clean and wear correct glasses for the activity
- Take care on steps and uneven floor if wearing multifocal glasses
- Do not use glasses from somebody else as they might not be suited for your eyes and increase your risk of falling



Your Health: Vision

Eye conditions

Cataracts can distort and blur your vision making it difficult to see obstacles and edges.

A cataract is a clouding of the clear lens in your eye and can result in:

- Blurred vision
- Glare sensitivity
- Distorted or double vision in the affected eye
- Feeling of looking through a veil or curtain

See your optometrist, as cataracts can be treated with stronger glasses, or in advanced cases, surgery.

Did you know that?

Expedited cataract surgery has been shown effective in reducing both falls and fractures

Other eye conditions, such as macular degeneration, glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy, impair vision. They may require you to learn new skills to move around safely.

If you have noticed any changes or loss of eyesight, talk to your doctor or optometrist as soon as possible – early detection can stop it getting worse.

If you have an eye condition, have your eyes and glasses checked yearly by an optometrist.

If you are a diabetic, this is covered by Medicare.

If you have impaired vision that cannot be corrected, you may consider a home safety assessment and modification.

Tips:

- Wear sunglasses and a hat outdoors to reduce glare
- Avoid sudden changes in light, or stop and give time for your eyes to adjust before moving
- Have good and even lighting in your home, in particular on stairs



Feet & Footwear

Why are your feet important for balance?

As we age our feet change shape, we can lose some feeling and flexibility and can become painful and swollen. These changes can impair balance and can increase your risk of having a fall.

Did you know that?

60-80% of older people have at least 1 foot problem

Common foot problems in older people include:

Hallux valgus and bunions:

- Hallux valgus is a malalignment of the big toe joint resulting in a bony growth on the side of your foot or a bunion.
- Often caused by abnormal pressure and rubbing of the big toe joint when wearing tight shoes.
- Most are painful and can be made worse by wearing ill-fitting shoes, often causing calluses to form.

Foot pain:

- Can be caused by many factors such as foot conditions; bunions, corns, calluses, flat feet, ill-fitting shoes, swollen feet and ankles.
- Foot pain can change the way you walk, limit your activity, affect your balance and increase your risk of having a fall.

Diabetes and foot ulcers:

- Diabetes can cause sensory loss and poor circulation in your feet.
- You may be more likely to injure or damage your feet which can form ulcers that heal slowly.

Keep your feet healthy by:

- Keeping nails trimmed
- Getting treatment for swollen feet and ankles, bunions, corns and calluses – podiatrist
- Wearing comfortable well-fitting shoes

If you notice changes in the shape of your feet, your feet are painful or swollen, you experience tingling or pins and needles, see your doctor or podiatrist to discuss options; such as a podiatry intervention.



Research has shown podiatry interventions consisting of foot orthotics, foot and ankle exercises, education and routine podiatry care can significantly reduce your fall risk

Feet & Footwear

Why is footwear important?

As your feet can change shape, swell and become painful, it can be difficult to find shoes that are comfortable and well-fitted.

Some shoes and slippers make you more likely to trip, slip or stumble and are considered unsafe footwear.

Safe footwear has:

- Thin firm soles with tread
- Low square heels
- Firm support around the heel to improve stability.

Well-fitted footwear helps to reduce your risk of tripping and falling.



Did you know that?

Poor fitting shoes can lead to foot problems such as pain, foot ulcers and toe corns; for example when your shoe is too long or too narrow

If you have difficulty finding shoes because of foot problems, ask a podiatrist about specialist shoe stores. Ensure your shoes are properly fitted by a professional.

Did you know that?

Walking barefoot or in socks indoors can increase your risk of falls by more than 10 fold

Avoid trips and slips by wearing well-fitted shoes, wearing shoes indoors and out and avoiding unsafe shoes such as slippers and high heels.

Tip:
**Buy for Fit,
not for Size**

Fear of Falling

Why is fear of falling important?

Falling can be very traumatic and devastating. It is not unusual to be a bit shaken after a fall.

Did you know that?

About half of older people are concerned about falling


You might be concerned about falling because you have fallen before, or know of someone who had a terrible fall.

You might also be concerned because you don't feel steady on your feet anymore or because you feel that your health is not as good as it used to be.

However, if fear of falling is continuously on your mind then it might stop you from doing daily activities you enjoy such as walking, shopping and visiting a friend.

Did you know that?

Being afraid of falling can increase your risk of having a fall



"The other month I tripped while walking down some steps and I fell quite hard. After that, I didn't go outside as much as I was afraid I would break something or wouldn't be able to get up by myself. My doctor referred me to a physiotherapist where I did a balance and strength exercise program. I haven't fallen since I started the exercise and am no longer afraid to go outside"

Fear of Falling

Why is fear of falling important?

When we are fearful of falling, we tend to :

- Be less confident about our balance
- Hesitate more in unfamiliar places
- Be overly cautious when walking in situations that we perceive as dangerous
- Avoid doing daily activities we enjoy

Limiting your activity stops you from getting the exercise your muscles and joints need to stay 'agile', which could cause your balance to get worse.

Talk to your doctor or other health professional about strategies you can take to reduce your risk of falling and make you feel more confident about your abilities.

Tips:

When fearful of doing a specific activity:

- You can first do it a few times together with someone, before doing it on your own
- You can think of solutions to make the activity less scary, e.g. install a handrail next to the bath tub
- *If you need help or assistance, be assertive and ask*

If you are fearful of falling or if you don't feel as steady on your feet any more , it is important to stay active:

- Exercise, particularly balance training, is known to reduce falls and risk of having a fall
- Exercise can help you feel more confident in your physical ability and balance
- Being more confident and less fearful can reduce your risk of falling

Medicines

Why are your medicines important?

Some medicines, whether they are prescription medicines or those bought without prescription, can make you dizzy or drowsy. This can predispose you to falling over.

Certain medicines can increase your risk of falling by **2-3 fold**. They include medication for:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Sleeping difficulties

People who take four or more medicines a day are at particularly high risk of falling.

See the National Prescribing Service website (www.nps.org.au) for a list of questions you may like to ask your doctor or pharmacist about the medicines you are taking.

If you have felt any side effects or are concerned about your medicines, discuss them with your doctor as soon as possible.

Medication review

If you are taking any medicines listed above or are taking four or more medicines, you should ask your doctor for a

medication review:

- The doctor will review your medicines to see if any changes can be made – reduce the dosage or frequency of your medicines, change or remove the medicine all together
- To do this you will need to make a list or take all of your prescription and non-prescription medicines and take it to your next appointment with your doctor
- Doing this once a year is ideal – mark the date in your calendar
- If you take 4 or more medicines, this should be done every 6 months

Research has shown that regular medication reviews can significantly reduce the risk of falling

Medicines

What can you do?

Avoid sleeping tablets if possible, try other methods like:

- Avoiding tea and coffee , smoking and alcohol before bed
- Exercise mid-afternoon
- Take shorter naps during the day
- Get into a good relaxing bedtime routine – try quiet music to improve sleep
- Go to bed at about the same time each night
- Get up at about the same time each day

Tips:

- To get the most out of your medicines, follow the instructions
- Only take your own medicines and never use someone else's, even if they are for the same condition; medication affects everyone differently!
- Alcohol can react with medicines; check with your doctor or pharmacist
- To help keep track of which medicines you take and when to take it, or if you take many different medicines, ask your pharmacist about the 'dosette box' or 'Webster packs'

Be an active partner in using your medicines!

- Get informed
- Open communication with your doctor and pharmacist
- Make informed decisions

Questions to ask your doctor or pharmacist:

What the medicine is for?

How to use the medicine?

When to stop using the medicine?

Special instructions

Side effects

Do's and Don'ts while using the medicine

Health & Lifestyle checklist

| | Yes | No |
|--|-----|----|
| History of falling | | |
| Have you had a fall in the past 12 months? | | |
| Since the age of 60, have you suffered any broken bones as a result of a fall? | | |

If you answer **No** to these questions, then you are doing well.

If you answer **Yes** to more than one of these questions, then you may be at risk of a fall. You might like to discuss this checklist during your next appointment with a health professional.

| | Yes | Not Always | No |
|---|-----|------------|----|
| Exercise & balance | | | |
| Do you engage in physical activity (e.g. walking, swimming or group exercise) for 30 minutes or more, most days of the week? | | | |
| Do you include balance and strength activities such as dancing, Tai Chi, yoga or an exercise session provided by a health professional or a fitness instructor? | | | |
| Eating healthy | | | |
| Do you eat three healthy meals per day? | | | |
| Do you eat at least 3–4 serves of high calcium foods (milk, yoghurt, cheese, almonds or salmon) per day? | | | |
| Do you spend a little bit of time in the sun? (6–8 minutes, 4–6 times per week, is plenty.) | | | |
| Do you drink 4–6 glasses of water (or other fluids) per day? | | | |
| Getting out and about | | | |
| Can you get out of a chair easily? | | | |
| Is it easy for you to maintain your balance when walking? | | | |

| | Yes | Not Always | No |
|--|-----|------------|----|
| Your health | | | |
| Does your current health allow you to confidently manage all your normal activities? | | | |
| Can you stand up and move around without feeling light-headed, dizzy or faint? | | | |
| Do you have good control of your bladder and bowel so that you can get to the toilet without rushing? | | | |
| Vision | | | |
| Have you had your eyes examined in the last 12 months? | | | |
| Do you have two separate pairs of glasses for reading and distance? | | | |
| Feet & Footwear | | | |
| Do you wear comfortable firm-fitting shoes with grip and support around the ankle? | | | |
| Have you had your feet checked and/or treated for corns, bunions or other foot problems that may cause pain and may affect your balance? | | | |
| Fear of falling | | | |
| Do you feel confident on your feet? | | | |
| Do you avoid activities that you consider may increase your risk of a fall? | | | |
| Medicines | | | |
| Have you had your medications reviewed by your doctor in the last 12 months? | | | |
| Do you avoid taking sleeping tablets? | | | |

If you answer **Yes** to most of these questions, then you are doing well.

If you answer **No** or **Not always** or **Not sure** to more than one of the questions, then you may be at risk of a fall.

Environment Hazards

Why is your environment important?

As we age our abilities change and we are at an increased risk of tripping, slipping and falling.

We lose the 'spring' in our step and we don't pick up our feet as much, this makes us more inclined to trip over things.

Just as we age, our homes age too with general wear and tear and lack of maintenance.

Did you know?

60% of falls happen in and around the home

By making your home and its surroundings safer, you can reduce the likelihood of a fall.

What can you do?

Simple tips for around your home:

- Remove clutter in walkways and on stairs (keep your walkways clear)
- Clean up spills in the kitchen as soon as they happen
- Tuck electrical cords under furniture or skirting boards, or coil or tape them next to the wall
- Remove mats and rugs or use double-sided tape
- Make sure the carpet is firmly attached
- Use non-slip rubber mats in wet areas
- Have the phone on a lower table, that is easy to reach from the ground in case you have a fall
- Adopt safer behaviours! –
 - Ask for help
 - Keep frequently used items in easy to reach places
 - Turn lights on before entering a room
 - Wear clothes that aren't too long or loose that might catch
 - Wear shoes indoors and outdoors, avoid walking in bare feet or socks

Environment Hazards

Home modifications

Consult an occupational therapist about larger home modifications or changes such as:

- Improve the lighting inside and outside your home: put in brighter light bulbs, install blinds to reduce glare, install sensor lights that automatically switch on and off
- Enhance contrast on the floor levels, edges of stairs and obstacles to make them stand out!
- Install firm handrails in places where you need more support – next to toilet, in the bath, outside stairs
- Re-hang bathroom and toilet doors so they open outward

Ask your physiotherapist or occupational therapist about walking aids:

- A walking aid may help improve your safety and mobility

If you have a **severe visual impairment** or at a high-risk of falls, you may consider a home environment assessment and intervention:

- This aims to reduce hazards around your home to make it safer and more accessible to your specific needs
- The assessment and modification is carried out by an Occupational therapist who will remove potential dangers, provide and install solutions, and will teach you how to move around your home, teach you how to use new devices and provide you with support

Home safety checklist

This checklist will help you identify aspects of your home that might increase your risk of a fall. Walk around each room and check that there is nothing that might pose a risk. For small safety improvements, see if a family member, friend or local handyperson can help you fix the problem. A health professional can also arrange for an occupational therapist to perform a home safety assessment and arrange for installation of home modifications.

| | Yes | No |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Entrance and hallway | | |
| Light switches easy to reach and near each doorway or hallway | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Doorbell easy to hear from other rooms | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Rugs or mats with slip-resistant backing | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Stairs and steps | | |
| Light switch at both the top and bottom of stairways | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Stairs and steps well lit | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Carpets or runners securely fixed | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sturdy handrail | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Edges of steps clearly marked | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Non-skid treads or paint used on the edges of each step | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Kitchen | | |
| Regularly used items within easy reach without climbing or bending | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Good lighting over bench tops and other work areas | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Good ventilation to reduce the risk of glasses fogging | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Floor surfaces slip resistant | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Spills cleaned up straight away | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sturdy low step stool with handrail if need to use higher shelves | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Yes No

Lounge/Dining room

- Good light (natural or artificial)
- Carpets and mats lie flat without wrinkles, curled or frayed edges
- Furniture arranged so that it is easy to walk around
- Cords and cables safely away from walkways
- Lounge chair easy to get out of
- Telephone within easy reach

Bedroom

- Bed easy to get in and out of
- Bedside light easy to switch on when in bed
- Telephone within easy reach when in bed
- Bedside table for drink, books, glasses
- Bed coverings clear of the floor
- Cords and cables safely away from walkways
- Walking aid (if required) within easy reach of the bed

Bathroom and toilet

- Slip-resistant mats on the floor
- Shower easy to access without stepping over a raised edge or hob
- Secure handrail in shower or on wall next to bath to avoid holding on to taps or towel rail to get out
- Soap and shampoo within easy reach without bending
- Towel rail within easy reach from bath or shower
- Handrail next to toilet
- Good lighting where medicines are kept

Outside the home

- Paths and entrances well lit at night
- Paths in good repair
- Steps with a sturdy, easy-to-grip handrail
- Edges of steps clearly marked and with slip-resistant strip
- Stepladder short and sturdy with slip-resistant feet
- Clothes line easy to access and reach
- Garden kept free of trip hazards, such as tools and hoses
- Garage / shed uncluttered and floors free of oil and grease
- Footpaths and public areas in good repair

EMERGENCY PLAN

Why is having an emergency plan important?

It is important to have an emergency plan to get help after a fall if:

- You live alone and need help quickly
- You are unable to get up by yourself
- You have suffered an injury

Knowing what to do if you have a fall can help you feel more confident.

1. Raising the alarm:

Get help by letting people know you have fallen:

- Know who to call for help – ambulance 000, keep a list of phone numbers of family or friends near the phone, or program them in to have one-touch dialling
- Keep a cordless or mobile phone on a table low to the ground
- Carry a portable alarm – can be connected to an emergency system or anything that makes a noise

2. Letting help in:

If you fall, raising the alarm will not be effective unless help is able to get in:

- Leave a spare key with a friend, neighbour or relative
- Let trusted family and friends know how to get into your house if you cannot let them in yourself

3. Know how to get up:

Lying on the floor or ground for some time can lead to additional problems such as pressure sores, dehydration or going without usual medicines.

It is important that you practise getting down to the floor and back up again. If it has been a long time since you have tried this, wait until someone is with you to help you if you need it.

EMERGENCY PLAN

FALL

Calm down

Catch your breath and compose yourself after the shock

Check your body

If you are not badly injured you can think about getting up
If you are injured, you need to stay where you are and put your plan to get help into action

Not injured

Injured



If you are not injured, look around for a sturdy piece of furniture (preferably a chair)

1. **Roll** onto your side
 2. **Crawl** or drag yourself over to the chair
 3. **Get onto your hands and knees**
 4. **From a kneeling position**, put your arms up onto the seat of the chair
 5. **Bring one knee forward** and put that foot on the floor
 6. **Push up with both arms and legs**, pivot your bottom around
- Sit down and rest, before trying to move**

Talk to your doctor about your fall and the possible causes

Tell someone else (family, friend or neighbour) that you have fallen

If you are injured or cannot get up

Do not panic

Use one of the strategies in 'Raise the alarm'

Try to stay warm

Gently move around to stop one part of your body getting too much pressure

After a fall

It is advised to go see a doctor, if you have:

- **Hit your head**
- **Injured** yourself
- Have a **pain** that concerns you
- Taken **blood thinners** or **anti-coagulants**

Fall Quiz

Section 1 – Understanding falls:

| | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| How many adults ages 65 years and over, have a fall at least once a year? | 1 in 3 | 1 in 5 | 1 in 10 |
| What percentage of falls in older adults result in an injury? | 15% | 25% | 40% |
| True or False: 'If you have fallen in the last 6 months, you are at a higher risk of falling again' | True | False | |
| True or False: 'Falls are the leading cause of disability in adults ages 65 and over' | True | False | |
| What can falls be a sign of? | Old age | Not concentrating | New medical problem |
| Multiple fall prevention strategies work better than single interventions in fall prevention? | True | False | |
| What is the most important thing you can do to prevent falls? | Stay active | Stay in bed | Avoid activity |

Section 2 - Exercise and balance:

| | |
|---|---|
| How much activity is recommended for adults aged 65 and over? | 15 minutes/day, 6 days a week 30 minutes/day, 3 days a week 30 minutes/day, 5 days a week |
| To improve balance, what type of exercise should you do? (check all that apply) | Leg strength exercises, Golf, Swimming, Tai Chi, Lawn bowls, Brisk walking, Dancing, Yoga |
| To improve fitness, what type of exercise should you do? (check all that apply) | Yoga, Golf, Swimming, Tai Chi, Lawn bowls, Brisk walking, Pilates, Climbing stairs |

Section 3 - Healthy eating:

| | |
|---|--|
| What is a common cause of older people falling, often making you feel weak and dizzy? | Eating fatty foods, Not drinking enough water, Eating food high in sugar |
| Which vitamin and which mineral do we need to eat more of to keep our bones strong? | Vitamin C, Sodium, Calcium, Vitamin E, Vitamin D, Iron |
| How long should we try and spend in the sun most days of the week? | 6-8 minutes, 10-15 minutes, 30+ minutes |

Section 4 - Your health:

True or False: You should have your eyes tested once every 3 years?

True False

Complete the sentence: Research has shown
_____ 1 _____ can significantly increase your risk of falling outside, you should consider having
_____ 2 _____ for walking.

a) 1. Multifocal glasses, 2. two separate pairs of glasses
b) 1. Unsafe shoes, 2. a walking stick
c) 1. Single lens glasses, 2. multifocal glasses

True or False: Being afraid of falling can increase your risk of falling, as you limit your activity resulting in poorer balance

True False

Which picture best represents a 'safe shoe/footwear'



How can you keep your bones healthy and reduce your risk of a fracture or break?

Eat a balanced diet with calcium and vitamin D
Exercise
Wear hip protectors
Reduce your fall risk factors
All of the above

Section 5 - Medicine:

When should you have a medication review?

When you take 4 or more medications
Take medication for anxiety and/or depression
Experience side effects
Take sleeping tablets
Concerned about your medicines
All of the above

What kind of medication particularly increases your risk of a fall?

Blood pressure medicines
Pain medicines
Sleeping tablets
Blood thinners/Anti-coagulants

Section 6 - Home safety:

What percentage of falls happen in and around the home?

40% 50% 60%

Identify 5 home hazards in this picture:

Clutter
Water on floor in bathroom
Folded over mats
Electrical cords exposed
Furniture jutting out

Section 7 - Emergency plan:

What are the 4 key points to an emergency plan?

1. Raise the alarm, 2. Let help in, 3. Know how to get up, 4. Tell someone/go to the doctors

1. Yell out for help, 2. wait for help to arrive, 3. let help in, 4. go to the doctors

1. Know how to get up, 2. raise the alarm, 3. let help in, 4. go to the doctors

Research has shown which intervention can significantly reduce the risk of falling?

Home safety modification
Balance exercise
Medication review
Multifocal glasses
Podiatry intervention
Aerobic exercise
Single lens glasses
All of the above