

Preventing Falls

Introduction

Falls and injuries caused by falling are a common and serious problem for older people. A fall can cause pain and injury, reduce confidence and lead to a loss of mobility because of a fear of falling again. It can indicate a new or deteriorating health problem and trigger a decline in independence.

Around one in three adults over 65 who live at home will have at least one fall a year, and about half of these will have more frequent falls.

Some older people may be reluctant to seek advice about falling. Your GP, Nurse or Therapist will take any concerns you have seriously because of the impact a fall can have on your health.

Many falls are preventable, and ageing does not have to mean loss of independence. Falls are not an inevitable part of ageing.

Reasons why people fall

- Difficulties walking or balancing
- Muscle weakness
- Poor vision
- A long term health condition such as Dementia or Parkinson's Disease
- Hazards in the home
- Poor footwear
- Side effects of medication
- Dizziness or light headedness

Advice to prevent having a fall

- Ask your GP to review your medication
- Ask your GP or pharmacist about the side effects of your medication
- Have your eyesight checked at least every two years and every year if you are over 70

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- Avoid wearing bifocal or varifocal glasses, if possible, consider separate glasses for reading
- Take your time when getting up out of bed or chair
- Keep your home clear of clutter, especially your floors
- Avoid trailing wires
- Avoid frayed carpets and ensure carpets are fixed firmly in place
- Remove mats and rugs
- Consider a second stair rail, or non-slip rails in your bathroom and at the entrance of your property
- Ensure your home is well lit, especially stairs and landings
- Use a bedside light when getting out of bed at night
- Think about having motion activated lights around your home
- Ensure your shoes and slippers fit well
- Wear shoes that have full sides and a back, avoid sling backs or flip flops
- Immediately mop up spillages at home
- Take care of your feet, if required see a chiropodist / podiatrist regularly
- Avoid walking in socks / tights or on slippery floors
- Avoid wearing long clothing or nightwear that you may trip on
- Keep warm – cold muscles don't work as well and may lead to accidents and injuries
- Think about getting your pet a bright collar or bell so that you avoid tripping over them
- Consider using / purchasing a falls alarm
- Eat a healthy diet to ensure you get enough calcium (dairy produce, tinned fish)
- If possible, keep items within easy reach to avoid climbing, bending, and stretching
- Avoid excess alcohol or reduce the amount you drink
- Make sure any walking aid you use are at the correct height and the rubber feet / ferrules aren't worn down
- Avoid sitting for too long, try and move more

If you do fall or nearly fall, especially due to dizziness or feeling lightheaded do not ignore it - let your GP know.

If you would like this information in another format or language, please contact the Your Experience Team on freephone 0800 694 5530. Alternatively you can email wcnt.youreexperience@nhs.net

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