

Up and about

Taking positive
steps to avoid
trips and falls



Did you know that about one third of older people fall down at least once a year? Because of falling, many people lose their confidence, even if they haven't hurt themselves.

Getting out and about is really important: to keep doing the things you enjoy and to stay connected with the people most important to you. But as we get older, falling, or fear of falling, can stop us from being physically active.

This guide gives you tips on how to keep active and reduce your risk of trips and falls. You might not need all of this information right now, but you can dip in and out of this booklet whenever you need to find the bits that are useful to you.

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**Whatever your age,
there are many
things you can do
to keep well, active
and reduce the risk
of falling.**

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Looking after your health to help avoid trips and falls

Looking after your eyes

Make the most of your free eye test. If you are over 60 you should go every year, and if you're under 60 you should go every two years. Remember to tell your optician if you've had a fall. If you or your family notice any changes in your vision, don't wait for your next eye test – go and see your optician as soon as you can. This is particularly important if you have dementia. (For more information see page 9.) Your optician will also give you advice about your eye health. Often sight loss can be avoided through correctly prescribed glasses, cataract surgery or other timely treatments.

Some glasses, for example bifocals or varifocals, can increase the risk of falling. As we get older we tend to look down at the ground more when we're walking and, if we look through the reading part of the lens, we might not see the ground clearly. Ask your optician to recommend the most appropriate glasses for you and make sure they are current, clean, correct and comfortable.

RNIB Scotland offers advice to anyone affected by sight loss. The helpline team will point you to any support or services you need to continue living life to the full. Call **0303 123 9999** from 8 am–8 pm weekdays and from 9am–1pm Saturdays.

You can also email **helpline@rnib.org.uk**
www.rnib.org.uk/scotland



By being physically active, and looking after your eyes, hearing, feet, bones and diet, you can reduce your risk of falling.



Clean your glasses regularly, and put them on if you get up in the night.

Looking after your hearing

Hearing problems are more likely as you get older, but people often wait several years before talking to their GP about them. Problems with hearing can affect your balance. If you've noticed a change in your hearing, speak to your GP.

Action on Hearing Loss is the largest charity for people who are deaf or have hearing problems. It gives information and support on its free helpline and textphone service, which is open Monday to Friday 9 am–5 pm.



Telephone: **0808 808 0123**
Textphone: **0808 808 9000**
www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk

Looking after your feet

It is important to take care of your feet, whatever your age. Problems like calluses, long toenails, poor circulation or loss of feeling can make you unsteady on your feet, and can also cause pain and discomfort.

If you have painful feet, you may not feel like walking about as much. Being less active causes your muscles to weaken and this increases your chances of tripping or falling. Don't ignore the pain. If you're worried about your feet, contact your local NHS podiatry (foot health) department or your GP for advice.

Wearing the right shoes

Wearing shoes that fit you properly will help you to move around more safely and comfortably inside or outside your home. Walking around the house in just socks or bare feet can increase the chance of slipping and falling. Ideally, don't wear slippers, but wear well supporting shoes, even inside the house. If you do wear slippers, make sure they're comfortable and have a fastening to keep them attached to your feet.

If you wear insoles or splints and haven't had these checked in a while, speak to your GP or the hospital department where you got them from to check that they are still right for you.



If you're looking for general advice on looking after your feet, you can access an NHS guide and video at www.knowledge.scot.nhs.uk/home/portals-and-topics/personal-footcare.aspx

You can also ask your local pharmacy (chemist), your local NHS podiatry (foot health) department, or visit the College of Podiatry website (<https://cop.org.uk>). It provides a wealth of information on common foot conditions and general foot health advice.

Top tips to help prevent foot problems



Follow our simple steps to help keep your feet in tip-top shape and reduce your risk of developing any problems.

1. Wash your feet every day

Use warm, soapy water and take care to dry them well, especially between your toes – this will help to prevent fungal infections, such as athlete's foot.



2. Pay attention to your socks

Wear well-fitting socks and change them every day to avoid sweaty feet.



3. Trim your toenails

Use proper nail clippers – and cut them straight across, not too short and not down at the corners, as this can lead to ingrowing toenails.



4. Keep your feet moisturised

If the skin on your feet is dry, put moisturiser on them before you go to bed, avoiding between the toes (this can lead to fungal infections).



5. Wear the right footwear

It's important to make sure your shoes are the right size for your feet. Buy footwear in the afternoon when your feet are at their largest.



6. Vary your heel height

Keep high heels for special occasions, as regular use can damage your feet.



7. Check your feet regularly

Giving your feet the once over every week will help you to spot any possible problems quickly.



8. Rotate your footwear

Try not to wear the same shoes two days in a row, to reduce your chances of fungal infection.

Looking after your bones

Keeping your bones healthy is important, regardless of your age. If your bones are strong, there is less chance of you breaking a bone if you fall. As we get older, our bones become thinner. There are a number of things you can do to help maintain your bone health.

Doing weight-bearing exercises (such as walking), eating a well-balanced diet rich in calcium, limiting how much alcohol you drink and stopping smoking can all help to look after your bones.

Good sources of calcium include:

- milk, cheese and other dairy foods
- green leafy vegetables, such as broccoli, cabbage and okra (but not spinach)
- soya beans and tofu, or soya drinks with added calcium
- nuts
- bread and anything made with fortified flour
- fish that you eat the bones of, such as sardines and pilchards.

As well as calcium, we need vitamin D for healthy bones. We get most of our vitamin D from sunlight. In adulthood and later life, lack of vitamin D can lead to osteomalacia (softening of the bones) and a greater risk of broken bones. If you can't get out and about easily, you might be given supplements. Speak to your GP to check that you are getting enough vitamin D.

Keeping physically active reduces the risk of breaking bones for older people. This is because it improves muscle strength, balance and coordination, which reduces the risk of falls.

Vitamin D and you

Further advice on vitamin D supplements is available at www.gov.scot/Topics/Health/ Healthy-Living/Food-Health/vitaminD or download this useful leaflet www.healthscotland.com/documents/5274.aspx



Osteoporosis

Having osteoporosis means that your bones are more porous than healthy bones and this makes them more fragile.

1 in 2 women and 1 in 5 men over the age of 50 will break a bone because of low bone strength, mainly caused by osteoporosis. Younger people can also be affected by this disease.

Having osteoporosis does not automatically mean that your bones will break, but it does mean that you have a higher chance of breaking a bone if you have a bump or fall. It is very important that you stay as active as possible to help maintain your bone health.

Broken bones caused by a fall are called ‘fragility fractures’. Some medicines can reduce your risk of breaking more bones. If you have been prescribed medication for osteoporosis by your GP, it’s important that you keep taking your prescription until you’re advised to stop.

Royal Osteoporosis Society

The Royal Osteoporosis Society works to improve the diagnosis, prevention and treatment of osteoporosis. Their trained nurses can answer medical queries and give you information about osteoporosis. The helpline is open Monday to Friday 9 am–5 pm.

Telephone: **0808 800 0035**

<https://theros.org.uk>



Your day-to-day weight-bearing exercises – such as carrying shopping – will help you to stay strong.



Other things to consider

Managing your medication

Take medicines at the right time of day and at the dose prescribed. Try setting a repeat reminder on your mobile phone, or if you use telecare you may be able to have a voice prompt added to your unit to remind you to take your medication.

Let your GP or pharmacist know if you ever feel faint, dizzy or drowsy – they may want to change the dose you're taking or try a different medicine for you.

Check the instructions, even if you've been taking the medication for some time. Sometimes you may need to take medication with water, food or on an empty stomach so that it works properly.

Ask your pharmacist for advice about whether you can drink alcohol with your medication or not – it can cause problems with some medicines.

Check with your pharmacist before taking any 'over the counter' medicines or supplements that you can buy without a prescription, as these can also have an effect on other medication you're taking.



If you take several different medicines, your GP should review them regularly, in case you no longer need them or the dose needs to be changed.



Dementia

Falls aren't an inevitable part of living with dementia. However, people with dementia can be at greater risk because they:

- are more likely to experience problems with mobility, balance and muscle weakness
- can have difficulties with their memory and finding their way around
- can have difficulties processing what they see and reacting to situations
- may take medicines that make them drowsy, dizzy or lower their blood pressure
- may find it difficult to communicate their worries, needs or feelings.

Each person will experience dementia in their own way, and may experience all or none of these risk factors.

Alzheimer Scotland

If you're worried about these symptoms speak to your health and social care practitioner or visit the Alzheimer Scotland website.

24-hour helpline: **0808 808 3000**

www.alzscot.org



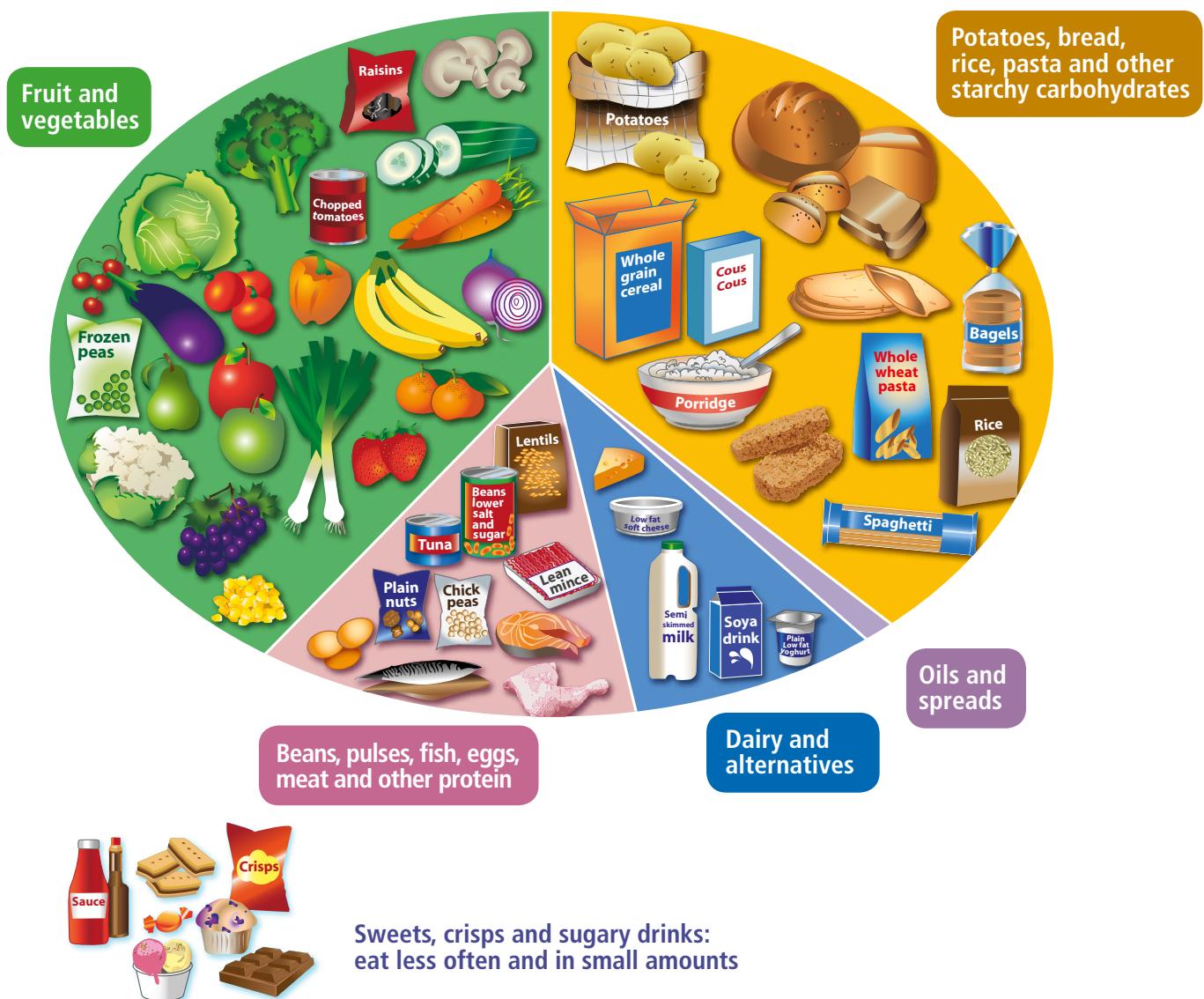
Your diet

Food

Eating a healthy, balanced diet and drinking plenty water is a good way to keep yourself up and about.

Missing a meal can make you feel dizzy or faint (light-headed), making you more likely to fall. It is important to eat regular meals and make sure you drink enough water throughout the day.

The ‘eatwell guide’ below highlights the different types of food that make up our diet. It also shows the proportion of each food that we should eat to have a well-balanced and healthy diet.



© Crown copyright 2016. Adapted from Public Health England in association with the Welsh Government, Food Standards Scotland and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland.

For the full version of the Eatwell Guide, see www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/528193/Eatwell_guide_colour.pdf

Fluid

Aim to drink 6–8 glasses of water per day. Water, lower-fat milk, and sugar-free drinks including tea and coffee all count.

Limit fruit juice and smoothies to a total of 150 ml a day to avoid damage to your teeth.

Making sure you stay hydrated is important to prevent urine infections, which can cause dizziness and can lead to trips and falls.

Alcohol

Drinking too much alcohol or smoking has a damaging effect on bones. It is best to stay within healthy guidelines for drinking and to avoid smoking altogether. Drinking alcohol can also affect your balance, coordination and judgement, which may increase the risk of a trip or fall.

Drinking guidelines:

To keep health risks from alcohol to a low level it is safest not to drink more than **14 units a week** on a regular basis.

If you regularly drink as much as **14 units per week**, it is best to spread your drinking over 3 or more days.

It's easy to pour yourself larger drinks at home. Using smaller glasses can help you keep track and cut back.

Have at least 2–3 alcohol free days each week.

Have a non-alcoholic drink or water with or after each alcoholic drink and avoid drinking too quickly.

Drink Wise Age Well

If you would like to speak to someone about your own or someone else's drinking, Drink Wise Age Well offers advice and support for people aged over 50.

Visit <https://drinkwiseagewell.org.uk>



Keeping active to avoid trips and falls

The benefits of being active

Being physically active has many benefits, even for people who have been inactive for years. Regular activity helps to strengthen muscles and may improve balance, stamina and flexibility, as well as reduce joint pain and maintain brain health. This all helps to reduce the risk of a fall.

Being physically active every day means that you're more likely to be able to carry on doing the things you enjoy. Getting out and about regularly can help you to keep in touch with family and friends and stay independent and mobile.

Tips for keeping active

- If you don't feel able to do exercises standing up, doing some light lifting with your arms when sitting down also counts as physical activity.
- Everyone should avoid sitting down for long periods of time (being sedentary). Try to break up the time by getting up regularly.
- If you can't exercise safely standing up, ask a physiotherapist or exercise professional to suggest exercises appropriate to you.

Physical activity should be fun, as well as good for you!

If you keep physically active as you get older you are likely to lead a more independent life. Whatever your age, it is important to be as active as you can.



How much physical activity should I do?

To reduce your risk of falls, it is also important to do activities twice a week that will help your strength and balance. The exercises on pages 16–19 can easily be done at home. Try and do them at least twice a week to improve your strength and balance.

Balance exercises can help you to become steadier on your feet and regain your balance if you trip or slip. Strength exercises help your muscles to become stronger and more powerful, making daily activities easier to do.

Aim to do 150 minutes of physical activity each week.

- The activity should cause you to breathe slightly harder and feel a bit warmer.
- Aim to stay within your own comfort level. Begin with activities that you know you can do comfortably, and increase the amount you do over time.
- If you are already reasonably physically active, you still need to ensure your strength, balance and bone health is at its best.

Choosing the best activities for you

Keeping active and doing some exercise should be fun. Meeting up with a friend to do an activity that you enjoy together can help you both become more active.

There are many ordinary daily activities that you can do to keep active, such as walking, climbing stairs, gardening or even doing the housework.

Going out with friends or a walking group to places that you know have good lighting and some seats to rest can increase your confidence and make you feel safe.

If you are already reasonably physically active, you still need to ensure your strength, balance and bone health is at its best. Swimming is good for your general health, but weight-bearing exercises are better for your bone strength.

Paths for All

If you enjoy walking, Paths for All has information on health walks in your area: call **01259 218888** or visit www.pathsforall.org.uk

If you'd like to know more about support services and where to go to be active, visit www.aliss.org



Tai chi and any form of dancing are great activities to help your bones, muscles and balance.

What if I have medical conditions?

If you have certain medical conditions, there may be some exercises or activities that aren't right for you. If you're not sure what you should and shouldn't do, speak to your GP or another health professional before starting any new exercises.

After a fall, many people become less active and stop going out. This may make matters worse – you can lose confidence and make your legs weaker. If you've had a fall, it is even more important that you stay active, and do this safely.

You may have been given fall prevention advice by an exercise professional, falls specialist nurse or physiotherapist. Keep doing any exercises they have suggested, unless you are injured or your health has changed.

Only do exercises you feel safe and confident doing. If you need help or advice about activities you can do, speak to a physiotherapist or exercise professional.

Bladder and bowel conditions

Sometimes people avoid being physically active due to bladder and bowel problems.

If you have a bladder or bowel condition that causes you to rush to the toilet, or visit more often during the day or night, you could be at an increased risk of falling. This is especially the case if you're already unsteady on your feet or feel dizzy when getting up from sitting or lying down.

Continence problems and the symptoms of bladder irritability can often be improved with the correct treatment.

Super 6 strength and balance exercises

These six exercises can help strengthen your legs and improve your balance. To feel the difference, you need to do these at least twice a week.



Safety check



Use a sturdy chair or something like a worktop for support.



Wear supportive shoes and comfortable clothes.



If any exercise causes pain in your joints or muscles, stop. Check you're doing it correctly and try it again. If pain persists seek advice from a physiotherapist.



Feeling your muscles work or a slight muscle soreness the next day is normal.



If you experience chest pain, severe shortness of breath, or dizziness, stop immediately and contact your GP practice or 111 if your GP practice is closed.



Try not to hold your breath – breathe normally throughout.

Super 1



Sit to stand

- 1 Stand tall in front of the chair, step back until your legs gently touch the chair.
- 2 Slowly lower your bottom back into the chair, reaching for the chair as you lower if needed.
- 3 Sit tall near the front of the chair, place your feet slightly back and hip-width apart.
- 4 Lean forwards and stand up (using your hands on the chair if needed). Repeat slowly up to 10 times.

Super 2



Heel raises

- 1 Stand tall with your feet hip-width apart, holding your support.
- 2 Slowly lift your heels, keeping your weight over your big toes and avoid locking your knees.
- 3 Aim to lift for a slow count of 3 and lower for a slow count of 5 each time.
- 4 Repeat 10–20 times.

Super 3



Toe raises

- 1** Stand tall with your feet hip-width apart, holding your support.
- 2** Slowly lift your toes, keeping your knees soft, then lower the toes slowly.
- 3** Aim to lift for a slow count of 3 and lower for a slow count of 5 each time. Avoid sticking your bottom out.
- 4** Repeat 10–20 times.

Super 4



Heel toe stand

- 1** Stand tall, holding on to the support.
- 2** Place one foot directly in front of the other so that your feet form a straight line.
- 3** Look ahead and balance for 10 seconds – only hold on if you need to.
- 4** Take your feet back to hip-width apart before placing the other foot in front and balancing for another 10 seconds. Repeat slowly 10 times each side.

Super 5



Heel toe walking

- 1** Stand tall, side on to the support.
- 2** Walk up to 10 steps forwards, placing one foot directly in front of the other so that the feet form a straight line.
- 3** Look ahead and aim for a steady walking action. Only hold on if you need to.
- 4** Take your feet back to hip-width apart before turning towards your support. Repeat the steps in the other direction.

Super 6



One leg stand

- 1** Stand close to your support – only hold on if you need to.
- 2** Balance on one leg, keeping the support knee soft and stand tall. Hold the position for 10 seconds.
- 3** Repeat on the other leg.
- 4** Repeat 10–20 times.

(Acknowledgement: Kindly used with permission of Later Life Training:
www.laterlifetraining.co.uk)

Keeping safe to avoid trips and falls

In the home

There are many trip hazards that are easy to do something about, such as:

- poor lighting
- loose rugs
- trailing cables
- leaving clutter on the floor or stairs.

If you've been living in your house for a long time it's often difficult to recognise these risks, so it's helpful to have someone else, such as a friend, relative or neighbour, take a look to see if anything could be made safer.

Care and Repair Scotland

Care and Repair offers help and advice to people in Scotland aged 60 and over, or who have a disability, to repair or adapt their homes so that they can live comfortably and safely in their own community.

Telephone: **0141 221 9879** (or look in your phone book for a service near you)

www.careandrepairscotland.co.uk



As well as looking after yourself, you need to be aware of other hazards that could cause a trip and fall in your home or when you're out and about.



Safety tips for getting moving

If you can, when you are walking, try to make sure your steps are the same length. Put your heels down first and lift your feet. Stand tall, let your arms swing naturally at your sides and look straight ahead.

When you need to look down, do this with your eyes, not your head. Taking slightly shorter steps will help when you're turning corners.

If you feel dizzy when you get up from a chair or bed, try moving your legs in a slow marching action before standing up. Remember to move slowly because your blood pressure can drop when you stand up and your body may take a little while to adjust.

Dizziness is often a reason for people falling. It can be caused by:

- a drop in blood pressure when you stand up too quickly
- missing a meal or not drinking enough water
- the side effects of medication.

If feeling dizzy is a problem for you, ask your GP about it.



Always take your time getting up to answer the phone or doorbell.

In the home

If you are worried about falling when you are alone at home, you might want to get a community alarm (sometimes called a personal alarm). A community alarm can help you call for help even if you can't reach for a telephone. These alarms are waterproof so can be worn in the bath, shower or garden.

Community alarms are available through your local authority or through housing associations. Contact your local authority for more information.

Getting up during the night

Some people find that they fall, or are most at risk of falling, when they get up during the night. If you need to get up, make sure that you put a bedside light on and put on your slippers and glasses (if you wear them).

Sit for a moment on the side of the bed and try to move your legs in a slow marching action before standing up slowly. If you find that you are getting up to the toilet more frequently in the night you could ask your GP, or another health professional for advice.

Pets

Pets, especially dogs, are a great way to feel connected and to get out and about walking. However, they can get under your feet, so be aware of where they are when moving around them.



Try putting a bell on your pet's collar so you know where they are.



How health professionals can help

If you feel you need more support around the house, you can self-refer to occupational therapy – see page 36 for more information.

Out and about

Walking sticks and other aids

If you feel that you need some more support when walking, speak to a physiotherapist about getting a walking stick or another aid that suits your needs.

Walking aids are most helpful when they've been matched to your needs, so you're best to avoid using someone else's.

If you have a stick or walking aid already, check that it is still in good working order, for example, that the rubber stoppers are not worn down. Your local physiotherapy department will be able to help you to replace worn down rubber stoppers.



Carry a mobile phone with you when you're out, in case you have a fall and need to call for help.

Being prepared in case you fall

The first thing to remember is not to panic. Although you may feel shocked, try to stay calm and assess the situation. There are two plans that you can follow:

- If you're not hurt, try to get up off the floor using your knees.
- If you think you may be hurt or can't get up without help, follow the Rest and Wait plan.

Both of these plans are explained on pages 28 and 30.



Always see your GP after a fall – it is important to find out the cause and to find ways to reduce the chance of falling again.

**Don't wait until you fall –
prepare yourself by practising.
There are some simple points
to remember for any fall.**



Coping with the fear of falling

We all trip or fall sometimes, but fear of falling can become a serious worry. If you've already had a trip or fall, you may feel anxious about falling again and this can make you avoid moving about. Avoiding physical activity due to fear causes your muscles to weaken, and this increases your risk of falling. It's important to stay active and keep mobile.

Your GP or other health professional can arrange for a 'home and person' risk assessment which will help to find out why you are falling. This assessment can be used to make a personal plan to prevent you from falling again and includes strategies to help build your confidence. Strength and balance exercises can also help you feel more confident.

Telecare services use technology to support people to live safely and independently in their own homes. Ask your GP, social worker or another health professional if telecare could help you.

Getting down to get up

First you need to practise getting down on to the floor safely. Make sure that someone is with you to lend a hand, in case you get stuck.

The best way to get up from the floor after a fall will vary from person to person.

Follow these simple steps to get down on to the floor safely:



1 Stand facing a sturdy seat or chair.

2 Place your hands on the seat.



3 Bring one knee down to the floor.

4 Slide your other foot back so that both knees are on the floor.



5 Bring one hand off the chair on to the floor.

6 Bring the other hand down on to the floor so that you're in a four-point kneeling position.



7 Lower your hips on to the floor slowly.

8 Lower yourself down until you're lying on the floor.

(Acknowledgement: Kindly used with permission of Later Life Training:
www.laterlifetraining.co.uk)

How to get up from the floor using your knees

Think about what you would do in different rooms. This will help you decide which pieces of furniture you could use to help yourself up.



1 Turn on to your back.



2 Roll on to your side.



3 Push on to your hands.



4 Push up on to your hands and knees.



5 Place your strongest leg forward.



6 Stand up.



7 Turn slowly.



8 Sit down. Rest and tell someone you have fallen.

(Acknowledgement: Kindly included with permission from Injury Matters, Australia: <https://injurymatters.org.au>)

Rest and Wait plan

If you have knee problems, or feel you can't get up, don't panic. Follow these steps instead:

Don't panic.



Call for help

Use an alarm if you have one, or try to attract your neighbour's attention by banging on the wall or floor or shouting. If you can, use a mobile phone or crawl to a telephone and call 999.



Keep warm

Try to reach for a duvet cover, blanket or clothing which is nearby in order to keep yourself warm while you wait for help to arrive. If you can, move away from any draughts.



Keep moving

If you lie in one position for too long you may become stiff, sore and cold. Try to rock gently from side to side, but if you have hurt yourself then keep the injured area still. Keep moving to stay focused until help comes.

If you fall when you're with someone

If you're with somebody, you can ask them to help. Make sure that this won't make an injury worse and won't put them at risk of hurting themselves too. If they can't help you to get up, ask them to call for more help from a neighbour, the ambulance service, or use a community alarm if you have one.

If someone you know falls

If you're with someone when they fall, try to keep them talking if they can. Don't try to lift them yourself unless it's safe to do so, as you may make their injuries worse or hurt yourself.

If you care for someone who may be at risk of falling and you need advice on the best way to help them get up after a fall, speak to a physiotherapist or contact your GP practice. Or see page 32 which provides you with a list of useful contacts for advice and support services.

For further information on how to reduce your risk of falling at home and what to do if you have a fall, go to the Preventing Falls section of the NHS inform website.

www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/preventing-falls



If you fall when you're with someone, you could ask for some clothes or a blanket to keep you warm.

Health and social care support services and advice

There's a lot you can do yourself, or with your family and friends, to reduce your risk of falls. However, the reasons people fall can be complex and sometimes you'll need some help from others.

Action on Hearing Loss

Advice and support for anyone experiencing hearing loss.

Telephone: **0808 808 0123** (Monday to Friday 9 am–5 pm)

Textphone: **0808 808 9000** (Monday to Friday 9 am–5 pm)

www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk

Age Scotland

Information and advice on topics including health, care, money and housing.

Telephone: **0800 12 44 222** (Monday to Friday 9 am–5 pm)

www.ageuk.org.uk/scotland

ALISS

Access to Local Information System for Scotland (ALISS) is a service to help you find health and wellbeing support services such as fall support groups or physical activity services.

Telephone: **0141 404 0239**

www.aliss.org



Alzheimer Scotland

A wide range of specialist services for people with dementia and their carers. Offers personalised support services, community activities, information and advice.

Telephone: **0808 808 3000 (24 hours)**

www.alzscot.org

Care and Repair Scotland

Help and advice to people in Scotland aged 60 and over, or who have a disability, to repair or adapt their homes so that they can live comfortably and safely in their own community.

Telephone: **0141 221 9879**

www.careandrepairscotland.co.uk

College of Podiatry

Provides information on footwear, walking and common foot problems.

<https://cop.org.uk>

Drink Wise Age Well

Helps people make healthier choices about alcohol as they age.

www.drinkwiseagewell.org.uk

NHS inform

If you need information about any of the health topics in this booklet (such as smoking, healthy eating) you can contact an NHS inform adviser to find services in your area. The helpline is open Monday to Friday 8 am–10 pm and Saturday and Sunday 9 am–5pm. It also provides an interpreting service.

Telephone: **0800 22 44 88**

Textphone: **18001 0800 22 44 88**

www.nhsinform.scot

NHS 24

If you're ill when your GP practice is closed and need medical advice, NHS 24 is there to help you get the right care from the right people at the right time.

Telephone: **111**

www.nhs24.scot

Paths for All

For information on local health walks in your area.

Telephone: **01259 218 888**

www.pathsforall.org.uk

RNIB Scotland

Advice and support for anyone experiencing sight loss.

Telephone: **0303 123 9999**

(Monday to Friday 8 am–8 pm; Saturday 9 am–1 pm.)

www.rnib.org.uk/scotland

Royal Osteoporosis Society

Advice and support for anyone at risk of or with osteoporosis.

Telephone: **0808 800 0035** (Monday to Friday 9 am–5 pm)

<https://theros.org.uk>

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service home fire safety visits

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service offers everyone in Scotland a free home fire safety visit. They will help you sort out a fire escape plan and provide information about smoke, heat and carbon monoxide alarms.

Telephone: **0800 0731 999**

www.firescotland.gov.uk/your-safety/forhouseholders/home-fire-safety-visit.aspx

Transport

Your local council can tell you about public transport and community transport in your area, such as MYbus, Dial-a-ride and taxi card schemes. If you need transport for a hospital or medical appointment, your GP or other health professional may be able to refer you to your local British Red Cross service.

Telecare self check tool

Telecare provides equipment that can help tell someone if there is an emergency or if you are having difficulties. As well as peace of mind for you, your family, and your carers, telecare may give you more freedom to live independently.

Take the quick self-check test to see if you or someone you know could benefit from telecare. It takes about 3 minutes, you don't need to give any personal details and you will be routed direct to your local telecare service.

www.telecareselfcheck.scot

Voluntary organisations

There are many voluntary or community organisations to help you keep active and healthy by giving you advice and support from volunteers. You could also try volunteering yourself.

To find your local volunteer centre visit the Volunteer Scotland website and search for your local area.

www.volunteerscotland.net

Some local health and social care services run a specialist falls prevention service. However, in most areas, help is available from day hospitals, falls clinics, community assessment and rehabilitation teams, physiotherapists and occupational therapists. Your GP or nurse can refer you to these services.

The following section provides a summary of the range of health professionals and services that you may come in contact with and how they can support you if you've had a fall or are at risk of falling.

Falls clinic doctor

Your GP may refer you to a falls clinic where a doctor will assess you to see if there is a medical reason why you've had a fall. They might take a blood sample or do some other tests. They will also look at your bone health and check your medication.

Nurses

Nursing staff may be involved in helping to identify your falls risk. This could be within the community or at a falls assessment clinic. They may, for example, check your blood pressure, check how you take your medications, carry out continence assessments, carry out vision tests or discuss your diet with you.

If you have osteoporosis, an osteoporosis specialist nurse may give you advice on how to manage your condition.

Occupational therapists

Occupational therapists can give you advice on how to prevent or manage falls. They can review your daily activities, and any medical conditions you have, to assess your risk of falling. If you need equipment to make your life a bit easier, such as rails or walking aids, they can arrange these for you. They can also help you practise tasks around the home to make them easier for you.

You can ask for a referral to an occupational therapist through your local GP practice.

Pharmacists (chemists)

Pharmacists are highly trained to give you advice on health issues and how to use medicines safely. Pharmacists work in general practice, hospitals and community pharmacies (chemists) and are often open at times when other healthcare services are not. Usually you don't need to make an appointment.

Physiotherapists

Physiotherapists can check your walking and provide the right aid for you. They can assess your movement, balance and muscle strength and suggest exercises to do at home or local classes. They work in hospitals, health centres and can come to your home. Your GP practice can help you find a physiotherapist.

Podiatrists (new name for chiropodists)

To help reduce your risk of falls, podiatrists will assess, diagnose and treat any problems you have with your feet and legs. They work with people of all ages, especially helping older people to stay active and independent.

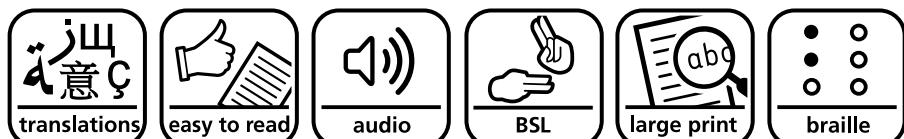
Social work services

Health and social care partnerships can help you access the services that you need and are entitled to. Social workers support and enable people to live as independently as possible. They do this by offering a range of help from information and advice to ongoing paid support. They will carry out an assessment of your current circumstances – including where you are a carer – when they will carry out a carers' assessment, and then work with you to make sure you get the right level of support.

For information ask your local GP practice or your local council for who to contact in your area.

This guide gives you tips on how to keep active and reduce your risk of trips and falls. It looks at many of the reasons you might fall and things you can do to keep safe, such as looking after your eyes and feet, managing your medication, making sure you drink enough water, and keeping physically active.

This resource may also be made available on request in the following formats:



0131 314 5300

nhs.healthscotland-alternativeformats@nhs.net

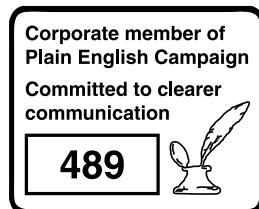
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