

# Keeping your feet in later life



# Who we are

**Age Scotland is the national charity for older people. We work to improve the lives of everyone over the age of 50 so that they can love later life.**

**Our vision** is a Scotland which is the best place in the world to grow older.

**Our mission** is to inspire, involve and empower older people in Scotland, and influence others, so that people can make the most of later life.

**Our three strategic aims** are to:



**Help older people to be as well as they can be**



**Promote a positive view of ageing and later life**



**Tackle loneliness and isolation**

# How we can help

**We know that growing older doesn't come with a manual. Later life can bring changes and opportunities to your life and you may need to know about rights, organisations and services which are unfamiliar to you.**

That's why we provide free information and advice to help you on a range of topics including benefits and entitlements, social care, legal issues such as Power of Attorney, housing and much more. All of our guides are available to download for free from our website, or you can contact our helpline team to have copies posted to you for free.

The Age Scotland **helpline** is a free, confidential phone service for older people, their carers and families in Scotland looking for information and advice.

Later life can bring times when you just need someone to talk to. Our **friendship line** is part of our wider helpline and older people can call us for a chat. We're here to listen, provide friendship and offer support.

## For information, advice and friendship



**Call us free on: 0800 12 44 222**  
**(Monday – Friday, 9am - 5pm)**



**Visit [agescotland.org.uk](https://www.agescotland.org.uk)**  
**to find out more.**



## Introduction

Anyone at any age can slip, trip or stumble, but this can be more of a worry as you get older. The good news is that you can reduce your risk of falling if you look after your body's strength, balance and flexibility as you age.

Age Scotland's health and wellbeing guides provide information about staying well in later life. This guide looks at daily, weekly and regular habits that can help you be more confident and steady on your feet.

Our guide **Worried about slips, trips and stumbles** explains how to be safer if you are worried about falling.





## Daily routines

Looking after your strength, balance and flexibility does not mean training for a marathon, just knowing how to stay as well as you can.

## Eat well

It is good if you can get the right balance of foods in your diet, especially the ones that support healthy bones as your bones become thinner as you get older. A well-balanced diet rich in calcium will help to keep your bones strong. Good sources of calcium include:

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

You need Vitamin D for healthy bones too. The sun causes your skin to make vitamin D, but between October and March this may not be enough. NHS Scotland advises everyone in Scotland to consider taking a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms particularly during the winter months. Foods rich in Vitamin D include:

- eggs
- lamb's liver
- oily fish
- yoghurts that have added Vitamin D
- bread that has added Vitamin D
- ask your GP practice if a Vitamin D supplement would be a good idea for you, especially if you have dark skin or are unable to get outdoors.

Our guide **Eat Well** gives more information about healthy eating in later life.



## Stay hydrated

Especially in hot weather, your body will not work as well as it should unless you stay hydrated throughout the day. Most people know they should drink around 6-8 glasses of fluid a day (roughly 1.5 to 2 litres) but may not know why it is really important. **Do not wait until you are thirsty before you have a drink.**



Our **Hydration** guide explains what you need to know.





## Look after your feet

If you have a medical condition like diabetes or arthritis, you already know that you need to look after your feet, but most people could have happier feet if they took better care of them. You should:

- check your feet every day - get to know them well
- wear comfortable, supportive shoes with a secure fastening, not loose slippers; do not wear the same shoes every day
- do not walk around in bare feet or just socks
- wear well fitting socks or tights made from natural fibres, change them every day
- wash your feet every day, then dry them carefully, particularly between the toes
- apply moisturising cream daily, on the back of your heels but not between your toes
- keep your toenails in good shape weekly by filing them with an emery board or using nail clippers; cut them straight across, not too short and not down at the corners.

The best shoes for your feet fit well and are well secured. Did you know it's best to buy shoes in the afternoon when your feet are largest? Try to vary the height of your heels, but keep them low enough to walk comfortably.

Your feet were designed to keep moving, so when you are sitting quietly, move your feet through their full range of motion to keep your ankles and feet flexible.

When you are walking always try to walk with a heel through to toe action to keep the muscles in the feet working well. This way you are less likely to catch your foot on the pavement.

You can check out foot care information online at **NHS Inform** - [www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/preventing-falls/keeping-well/looking-after-your-feet](http://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/preventing-falls/keeping-well/looking-after-your-feet) - or call them on **0800 22 44 88**.

# Weekly routines

## Exercise and physical activity

Try to build activities that improve strength and balance into your routine at least twice a week. This can feel like a challenge if you have been stuck at home for a while, but everything you can do will help.

These could be balance exercises like:

- standing on one leg
- walking on tip toes
- dancing to improve balance

It's OK to wobble as you do these exercises, wobbling improves your balance!

For strength activities, you want the muscles to feel warmer and tense, so this could be:

- repeated sit to stands
- using ankle or wrist weights
- going up and down stairs a few times in a row.

Tai Chi, Bowls, Yoga and Pilates all help strength and balance too.

Try not to sit down for too long, and try to be active every day. If you safely can, you should build up over time to around 150 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity a week; moderate activity should make you feel slightly 'out of puff', but still able to have a conversation.

If you can be more active you can aim for 75 minutes of vigorous intensity physical activity a week: vigorous activity should make you breathe faster and have difficulty talking without pausing.

Our guide **Staying active in later life** explains more





## Six simple exercises

If you struggle to exercise every day, try fitting in exercise over a week. There are six simple exercises that can help with strength and balance. They do not take much time, and you can usually fit them in whilst you are doing something else such as waiting for the kettle to boil, or in advert breaks. Pairing exercises with things you normally do makes it easier to remember them and stick to good habits. The routines below are just suggestions; you can fit the exercises into your day however you like.

For all the exercises, if you are worried that you might fall, make sure you are near a solid surface that could support you. Do not worry if you wobble, wobbling is good for your balance.



### Sit to stand in the ads

While TV adverts are on, or in between programmes, go and sit on a hard chair. Sit tall near the front of the chair, feet slightly back and hip-width apart. Lean forwards slightly and stand up powerfully using your legs (use your hands to support you if you need to). Then slowly sit down again. Repeat up to 10 times.



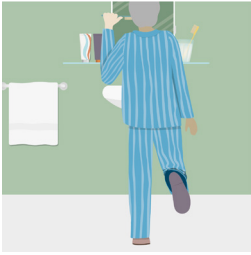
### Washing up toe raise

After the dishes are washed stay by the sink. Stand tall with your feet hip-width apart, holding on to the sink edge lightly. Slowly lift your toes (slow count of 3), keeping your knees soft, then slowly lower your toes again (slow count of 5). Try to keep your bottom in and back straight. Repeat 5-10 times.



## At the door heel toe stand

Before you head out of your front door, stand tall with your feet hip-width apart, holding on to the door handle or frame for support if you need to. Place one foot directly in front of the other so that your feet form a straight line. Balance for 10 seconds. Take your feet back to hip-width apart then put the other foot in front and balance for another 10 seconds.



## One leg tooth brushing

Stand close to the sink as you brush your teeth. Balance on one leg, keeping your knees soft, and stand tall, only hold on to the sink if you need to. Hold the position for 10 seconds. Now do it on the other leg.



## Waiting for dinner heel raise

While dinner is cooking, stand tall with your feet hip-width apart. Slowly lift your heels (slow count of 3), keeping your weight over your big toes and avoiding locking your knees. Lower your heels (slow count of 5). Repeat up to 10 times.



## Kettle boiling heel toe walk

They say the watched kettle never boils, but it might seem quicker if you exercise while you wait. Stand tall. Place one foot directly in front of the other so your feet form a straight line and walk up to 10 steps forwards alongside your kitchen table or surface. Look ahead and aim for a steady walking action. Take your feet back to hip-width apart, then repeat the steps in the other direction.



## Regular routines

### Look after your senses

You should try to keep up to date with appointments that can help you stay as well as you can be. Problems with your eyes and ears could affect your balance and increase your risk of slips, trips and stumbles.

Your **GP practice** can refer you for checks on your hearing or ears if there are problems with your ears that could affect your balance.

Your **optician** can check your eyes and make sure you have the right glasses to safely do what you need to at home and outdoors.

### Declutter with a friend

Have a look around your home and see if there any accidents waiting to happen. You may not notice the risks around your home as it is your environment and you have developed routines and accumulated possessions – maybe clutter – over many years. You may have furniture that gets in the way when you need to move about; trailing wires, glossy magazines or loose rugs could be a risk if you need to move quickly to answer the door or the phone.

It may help to invite a friend over and ask them to look at your home with fresh eyes – you can return the visit and look over any risks in their home too.



## Who can help?

### Age Scotland helpline: **0800 12 44 222**

The Age Scotland helpline provides information, friendship and advice to older people, their relatives and carers.

If you need an interpreter call 0800 12 44 222 and simply state the language you need e.g. Polish or Urdu. Stay on the line for a few minutes and the Age Scotland helpline will do the rest.

You can call us on **0800 12 44 222** for copies of our publications or download / order copies from our website at **[www.agescotland.org.uk](http://www.agescotland.org.uk)**.

### NHS Inform

Information and advice if you are well, but have a question about your health or local NHS services. Call **0800 22 44 88** or see their website **[www.nhsinform.scot](http://www.nhsinform.scot)**.

This information guide has been prepared by Age Scotland and contains general advice only, it should not be relied on as a basis for any decision or action and cannot be used as a substitute for professional or medical advice.

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Please note that the inclusion of named agencies, websites, companies, products, services or publications in this information guide does not constitute a recommendation or endorsement by Age Scotland or any of its subsidiary companies or charities.

# How you can help

## Our vision is a Scotland which is the best place in the world to grow older.

All the information and advice we provide is free and completely impartial and in helping people access their rights and entitlements, it can be life changing.

We are an ageing population and more people than ever are coming to us for support. You can help us be there for those that need us most.



### Make a donation

No matter how small or large, donations make a massive difference and help us continue our important work.

- ▶ Call **03330 15 14 60**
- ▶ Visit **age.scot/donate**
- ▶ Text **LATERLIFE** to **70085** to donate £5.\*



### Fundraise

Whether it is having a bake sale, running a marathon or knitting small hats for the Big Knit, there are so many ways to raise vital funds to support our work. To find out more, call **0333 323 2400** or visit **age.scot/fundraise**.



### Leave us a gift in your Will

By choosing to leave us a gift in your Will, you can help Age Scotland to continue being there for vulnerable older people in the years to come. To find out more, call **0333 323 2400** or visit **age.scot/legacy**.

\* Texts cost £5 plus one standard rate message

# Let's keep in touch



## Sign up to our newsletter

Our regular newsletters by email contain details of our campaigns, services and how you can support our work.

Sign up today by visiting **[age.scot/roundup](https://age.scot/roundup)**



## Follow us on social media

Our social media channels are a great way to keep up to date with our work and issues that affect older people.



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**[@age\\_scotland](https://www.instagram.com/age_scotland)**



**[/AgeScotland](https://www.linkedin.com/company/AgeScotland)**

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**Head office**

0333 323 2400

**Age Scotland helpline**

0800 12 44 222

**Email**

info@agescotland.org.uk

**Visit our website**

www.agescotland.org.uk

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