

# FALLS

are preventable.

Falling is not an inevitable part of getting older. There are ways to reduce the risk of falling. This Booklet outlines a variety of steps you can take to try to prevent falls.



# KEEPING YOUR HOME SAFE

Here are some tips for making your home safer. Many of them are common sense and you may well have thought about them already. But it's worth looking at them again as a reminder.

- Have handrails fitted to steps and stairs and beside the bath/shower and toilet.
- Remove all clutter, trailing wires or damaged carpet.
- Ensure your furniture arrangement allows enough room for any walking aids you may use.
- Ensure your home is well lit at all times.
- If you have to get up at night - put on the light.
- Fit long-life energy efficient light bulbs to avoid frequent changing.
- Use non-slip mats in the bath or shower.
- Remove all loose mats from your home or fix them down with non-slip tape.
- Never stand on a chair or stool to attend to household chores - it is best to ask for help if you cannot manage.
- Keep the garden and outside paths clutter free.



# LOOK AFTER YOURSELF

## STAY ACTIVE

Exercise is one of the best ways of reducing your risk of falling because it helps to make your muscles stronger and improves strength and balance.

Good forms of exercise include:

- Walking
- Light gardening and housework
- Keep fit classes for older people
- Tai Chi classes

You must speak to your doctor before starting to exercise if you are new to physical activity and remember to:

- Start gently and warm up
- Build up slowly
- Don't try to do more than you feel comfortable with

Remember that reducing physical and social activities is not the answer. Rather than preventing you from having a fall, this will actually increase your risk.



## LOOK AFTER YOUR FEET

- Wear well fitting shoes with thin soles and high back and sides
- Get regular foot care check ups from your podiatrist/chiroprapist
- Avoid slippers that are loose or have no backs
- Avoid high heels



## KEEP YOUR DIET HEALTHY

A balanced diet will help to keep your bones strong. Always include foods with calcium and vitamin D in your diet. Calcium can be found in milk, cheese and yoghurts. Vitamin D can be found in meat, sardines, milk puddings and oily fish. Most spreads and breakfast cereals have added vitamin D.



## LOOK AFTER YOUR EYESIGHT

Eyesight tests are free if you are aged 60 or over. Have your eyes tested at an opticians every year. Avoid Bifocal or Varifocal glasses. Use two separate pairs - one for reading and one for walking around and distance.



# MANAGE YOUR MEDICATIONS

Medicines are known to be involved in causing falls.

Any medicine acting on the brain or circulation can cause falls e.g. sleeping tablets, anti-depressants, blood pressure tablets and strong pain killers.

If you take more than four medicines ask your GP or Pharmacist to check that they are appropriate and not causing you unwanted side effects.

If you feel dizzy, faint or unsteady after taking your medicines or when you stand up let your doctor know.



# PREVENT DIZZY SPELLS

- Some people feel faint or light-headed if they stand up from a bed or chair because your blood pressure can drop suddenly if you get up too quickly.
- To avoid this happening take your time getting up. Tensing your arms and legs a few times before you get up helps.
- When getting out of bed, sit on the edge for a minute or so before standing up.
- Moving your head too quickly or leaning your head back can make you dizzy so avoid these activities.



# WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE A FALL

## The Rest and Wait Plan

Try to call for help:

- Use a pendant alarm if you have one
- Bang on the wall
- Call out for help
- Crawl towards your phone
- Move to a soft surface such as a carpet if possible



### Keep warm:

- Try to reach for something to cover yourself with
- Try to move out of draughts

### Keep moving:

- Do not lie in one position for too long, as you may get cold or could develop a pressure sore
- Roll from side to side and move your arms and legs if possible

# WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE A FALL

## The Up and About Plan

Roll onto your hands and knees and crawl to a stable piece of furniture such as a bed or chair.



With hands on the support, place one foot flat on the floor bending your knee in front of your tummy.



Lean forwards, push on your hands and bring your feet together and stand up.



Turn and sit on the seat. Rest a while before getting up.



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Contact your GP  
if you have a fall,  
especially if you  
hurt yourself.

Useful Contact  
AGE NI 9023 3341

