



Staying Steady

*Advice and information
on how to prevent slips,
trips and falls*

y o u r h e a l t h o u r p r i o r i t y



Staying steady

Falls, slips and trips are the most common type of accident in the home. Many people are seriously injured every year which can lead to a reduction in their quality of life.

However, by taking some sensible precautions most accidental falls can be prevented.

What you can do

General health and well-being can make a big difference to your quality of life, whatever your age. Eating well, keeping fit, looking after your bones and your feet are all important and can help you stay mobile and independent.

Improving your strength and balance

Falls can be due to weak muscles and poor balance.

You can improve these by:

- Regular physical activity such as walking, gardening, housework, dancing, keep-fit classes or chair-based exercises.
- Regular gentle exercise and massage to relieve arthritic pain and swelling.
- Balance training exercises.

Remember, if you are new to physical activity, speak to your GP first and take it gently at first and build up slowly. Always start with a warm-up and finish by cooling down.

For more information on exercising, visit the Age UK website at www.ageuk.org.uk or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 0845 602 4832.

Don't give up on exercise just because you have had a fall or are afraid of falling. Reducing your physical activity can actually make you more prone to falling!

Healthy eating

Ensure that you keep your bones strong by eating a healthy balanced diet which contains:

- Meat, fish and vegetarian alternatives; bread, cereals and potatoes; milk and dairy foods; fats and sugars (minimize if overweight); fruit and vegetables.
- Calcium – found in milk, cheese and yoghurt, other dairy products and other foods. If you don't eat these foods daily, consider a calcium supplement – ask your GP.
- Vitamin D – found in oily fish (e.g. sardines, tuna), meat and added to foods such as breakfast cereals. Sunlight also provides vitamin D. Ten minutes of sun on your face and hands every day will help. Don't forget to wear sunscreen – it blocks harmful rays but lets the Vitamin D- generating rays through.

If you are on a special diet, please contact your dietician for advice.

Further nutritional information is available at your health centre or local library. Contact PALS for more details.

Managing your health

Medicines - If you are taking regular medicines, make sure you have a medication review at least every year. If your medicines make you feel faint or dizzy make sure you let your GP or nurse know. Always follow the instructions on your medicines. Never mix alcohol with medication.

Flu - Flu can make you unsteady on your feet. Free flu jabs are available – ask at your GP surgery.

Eyesight - Your vision plays an important role in your sense of balance, so make sure you have your eyes checked regularly – at least every two years. Separate glasses for reading and distance are safer than bifocals or vari-focals. If you have diabetes or glaucoma you should have your eyes checked every year.

Eye tests are free if you are aged 60 or over. You may be able to get help with the cost of glasses – ask your optician for advice. Free eye tests are available at home if necessary – contact PALS for more information.

Feet – Looking after your feet and having your feet checked, either by you or by your spouse, relatives or carers is very important. Foot problems can have a major impact on mobility, balance and stability. Even long toenails can cause pain and an increased risk of falling – seek help if you have trouble cutting them yourself.

- Wash your feet daily in warm, soapy water
- Reduce hard skin by using a foot file or pumice stone
- Keep skin supple by using a moisturiser
- Trim or file your toenails little and often

If you have foot problems / discomfort that affects your walking and balance, consult a Podiatrist registered with the Health Professions Council (HPC). If you want to apply for an assessment for advice from your local NHS service, you will need a referral from a health professional such as your GP. All NHS Podiatrists are HPC registered.

If you are in any doubt see your GP for advice.

Clothes and shoes

Avoid wearing loose-fitting or open-backed footwear or trailing clothing that might cause you to slip or trip. Wear flat shoes with a fastening and a broad heel that have a man-made sole for comfort and grip i.e. not slip-ons and not leather soles. Try to avoid walking in socks or tights on slippery floors.

Your home

Small changes in your home can help reduce accidents:

- Use non-slip mats under rugs, in the kitchen and inside and next to the bath. Try to avoid having loose rugs and mats altogether.
- Handrails by the front/back door, by the toilet, bath and stairs will make getting around easier.

- Good lighting is very important, particularly on the stairs where you should use a bright light bulb. If you need to go to the toilet in the night, turn on a light so you can see where you are going or buy a plug-in nightlight (available from DIY stores).
- Keep the floor clear of trailing flexes, fraying carpet edges and clutter.
- Some pets can get under your feet – think about giving them a brightly-coloured collar to make them more visible.
- Consider getting a mobile or cordless phone (and keep it with you) or an answering machine, so that you don't have to rush to answer the phone.
- Always mop up spills immediately.
- See if you can get help for chores such as changing curtains, bedding or light bulbs.
- Make sure you have everything you need e.g. soap, towels etc within easy reach before taking a bath or shower. Similarly, have items used on a regular basis within easy reach in the kitchen.
- Remove casters from furniture to make it more stable.

The Handyperson services offer help with making changes around the home to prevent falls. The services are free and they can carry out small-scale jobs around the home such as tacking down a carpet, fixing curtain rails, installing hand and grab rails and moving furniture. For more information on Handyperson services contact PALS – see the back of this leaflet for details.

Community alarms

Care Link services provides reassurance, peace of mind and a response to emergency situations 24 hours a day every day.

If you are worried about falling when you are alone at home you could think about getting a community alarm with a pendant. This will allow you to call for help from your home even if you can't reach a telephone. You can contact a 24-hour response centre by pressing a button on a pendant or wristband that you wear all the time. You can also answer your phone by pressing your pendant.

To find out more about community alarms contact Care Link services on 01977 723957 or email carelink@wdh.co.uk.

Telecare

Telecare offers extra support with remote sensors such as a fall and/or bed/chair occupancy sensors.

The falls detector is worn on a belt around the waist, which will sense the impact and angle of a fall and raises an immediate response from the 24-hour monitoring centre or designated carer. The falls detector can also be activated manually by an integrated trigger, enabling people to live more independently and with the reassurance that help can be quickly summoned if required.

The bed/chair occupancy sensor provides an early warning by alerting the response centre or designated carer that the person has left their bed and not returned during a pre set time period, indicating a possible fall.

To find out more about Telecare contact:
telecare@wakefield.gov.uk

What to do if you have a fall

Try not to panic!

You will probably feel a little shocked and shaken, but try to stay calm. Don't get up straight away, give yourself time to collect yourself and get your breath back.

Your family/ carer should not try to lift you up.

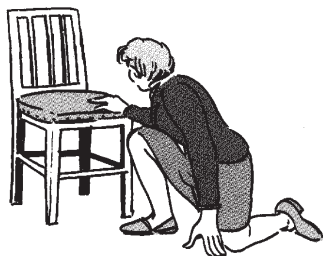
Get help if you can. Don't move if you feel pain. Try to attract attention by banging on the wall, using a personal alarm (if you have one) or calling 999 if you can reach a phone.

If you have hurt yourself:

- Move to a soft surface – try to move to a carpeted area.
- Keep warm – try to reach for something to use as a blanket to cover yourself with.
- Keep moving – roll from side to side and move your arms and legs if possible.

If you feel that you are not hurt then try to get up using the guidelines below.

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



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



3. Lean forwards, push on your feet and hands until you bring the other foot to be beside the first.



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

Notify your GP practice if you have a fall or start feeling unsteady, even if you feel all right otherwise. If you are concerned about your falling, ask for a falls risk assessment.

The risk assessment will try to work out what is making you likely to fall and will look at ways to reduce your risk of falling – for example, doing strength and balance exercises, testing your eyesight, checking your home for hazards and looking at your medicine to see if it needs changing.

A home falls prevention checklist

Use this checklist to help identify and resolve some of the potential hazards in and around the home. If the answer to any of the questions is 'no', contact PALS.

Inside

Lighting and electrical	Yes	No
1. Are all areas of the home well lit to avoid any dark spots?		
2. Are all electrical flexes and telephone cords tucked well out of the way?		
3. Can you reach electrical switches and sockets?		
4. Can you switch a light on easily from your bed?		

Calling for help	Yes	No
1. Do you have easy access to a telephone in all rooms of the house?		
2. Do you have any other means of calling for help if you need it eg. cordless telephone and/or pendant alarm?		

3. Has someone reliable got a spare house key in case of an emergency?		
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Flooring and stairs	Yes	No
1. Are the floors and stairs covering safe and in good repair?		
2. Are rugs flat and stable?		
3. Are all floors clear of any spillages?		
4. Is there room to walk safely up stairs and around the house without obstacles/clutter getting in your way?		
5. Are stairs safe to use and easy to see?		

Furniture	Yes	No
1. Is furniture placed so that you do not have to reach or lean too far to get things or do tasks?		
2. Can you reach all of your cupboards easily?		
3. Is your bed a good height for you to get in and out of?		

4. Does your bed/chair stay still when you sit on it?		
5. Can you safely reach to hang your clothes?		
6. Are all pieces of furniture stable and fixed to the floor or wall if necessary?		
7. Is your favourite chair safe and comfortable and easy to get out of?		
8. Is any open fire well-guarded?		

Personal	Yes	No
1. Do you eat a healthy, balanced diet?		
2. Have you recently checked your slippers and shoes to make sure they are in good repair and not slippery?		
3. Do you have your eyes tested regularly – at least every 2 years?		
4. If you have a walking aid, have you checked the rubber ferrule?		
5. Do you see your GP regularly for health and medication reviews?		

6. Can you manage to bath or shower safely?		
7. Do you manage to sleep the whole night without getting out of bed?		
8. Can you get on and off the toilet easily?		
9. Can you get to and open your windows and doors easily?		

Outside

Lighting and security	Yes	No
1. Are door locks secure but able to be opened easily?		
2. Is access to your front door level and safe?		
3. Are all areas around the home – particularly steps – well-lit?		
4. Are paths in good repair and safe to use?		
5. Are steps in good repair and safe to use?		
6. If you use a dryer or washing line, is it easy to reach and use?		
7. Can you pick up your deliveries (post, paper, milk) quite easily?		

Personal Action Plan

Note here anything you need to do to reduce risks and improve safety.

Useful contacts

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Monday – Friday 9am to 5pm 0845 602 4832

Social Care Direct 0845 8503 503

Age Concern Wakefield District 01977 552114

Care Link 01977 723957

(0845 numbers are local call rates)

Produced in partnership with:

The Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust

South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

Wakefield District Housing

NHS Wakefield District

Wakefield Metropolitan District Council

For queries about this leaflet, please contact:

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You can find out more about a wide range of health service and related issues from our PALS office based at NHS Wakefield District. You can also make comments about services. You can phone on: 0845 602 4832 or email: pals@wdpct.nhs.uk

If you require this leaflet in another format such as large print, audio tape or other language, please contact PALS on: 0845 602 4832.

اگر آپ کو یہ کتابچہ کسی اور شکل جیسے کہ بڑی لکھائی، سمی ٹیپ یا دوسری زبان میں درکار ہے، تو مہربانی فرما کر،
میشنٹ ایڈوائس اینڈ لائی ایمن سروس (PALS) سے، اس نمبر پر رابطہ کیجئے: 0845 602 4832

Ref: WD56a

Updated: November 10

Produced by Design and Print Dept - Pinderfields General Hospital

