

Falls prevention advice from our Physiotherapy team

For anyone who's had a fall or may be
at risk of falling



If you've had a fall before, or you're feeling unsteady on your feet, there are some simple things you can do to make your home safer and reduce the risk of it happening again.

Around the home



Floors

- Remove small rugs and fix any loose or fraying carpet that could catch your foot.
- Make sure stair carpet is firmly in place.
- Slippery lino and heavily patterned carpets can make it harder to spot hazards, try to avoid them if you can.



Furniture and layout

- When you stand up from a chair or bed, pause for a few moments before setting off.
- Clear walkways through each room and to the front and back doors.
- A chair that's the right height makes it easier to get up safely.



Handrails and supports

It might help to fit rails:

- besides steps to the front or back door
- upon both sides of the stairs
- next to the toilet and bath.



Wires and tubing

Move any wires or cables (like for lamps or heaters) that run across walkways. Make sure any oxygen tubing is secured out of the way.



In the bathroom

- Use a non-slip mat and consider a bath sheet.
- A commode or urinal bottle for night-time use can avoid rushing to the toilet.
- A raised toilet seat can make it easier to stand up.



Reaching and bending

- Keep everyday items within easy reach.
- Don't stand on stools or chairs to reach things.
- An 'easi-reach' grabber can help you pick things up from the floor safely.



Clothing and footwear

- Shorter nightwear is safer, especially on stairs.
- Sit down to dress wherever possible.
- Use aids like long-handled shoehorns or sock aids if you find bending difficult.
- Choose well-fitting shoes with non-slip soles. Velcro or elastic laces can help too.



Walking aids

If you use a stick, crutch or frame, it's important it's the right height and has a good rubber grip. Speak to a physiotherapist for an assessment, they'll make sure you've got the right support for you.



Lighting

- Use bright 100 watt bulbs at the top and bottom of the stairs.
- Keep a lamp by the bed.
- A nightlight on the landing or in the bedroom can help if you need to get up during the night.

Looking after yourself



Your eyesight

- Have your eyes tested once a year.
- Wear your glasses, even at night if you need to get up.
- Keep glasses clean and in a case to avoid scratches, which can affect your vision.



Going to the toilet

If you're needing to rush to the toilet more often, or finding you're up several times during the night, it can increase your risk of falling, especially if you're sleepy or unsteady on your feet.

Here are a few things that might help:

- Speak to your nurse or doctor about what's going on. They might want to:
 - test for a urine infection
 - talk through any gynaecological or prostate problems
 - review any medications you're taking, especially if you're on diuretics (also known as water tablets), which can make you need to go more often.
- Try to drink plenty throughout the day, but avoid drinking anything in the hour before you go to bed, that way you're less likely to need the toilet during the night. Caffeine can irritate the bladder, so switching to decaffeinated drinks can help.
- You might want to use a commode or urine bottle at night, to avoid walking far when you're sleepy.
- Bed or chair protectors and absorbent garments can help you feel more confident – there are different options available, so speak to your nurse if you'd like to know more.



Food and drink

- Not eating or drinking enough can make you feel faint or dizzy. If you cannot manage full meals, try small snacks and milky drinks through the day.



Medication

Some medicines can make you feel unsteady. Speak to your GP, nurse or pharmacist if you're unsure, they can review your prescriptions and offer advice.



Staying active

Take regular exercise to maintain muscle strength and help with balance and confidence.

What to do if you fall



If you can't get up

- Press your pendant alarm if you have one.
- Try to shuffle to a phone.
- Bang on the wall or floor.
- Shout for help.

Do not stay in the same position. Keep moving a little if you can, it helps with circulation and stops pressure sores from developing.



How to get up safely



- 1 Give yourself time to recover a little.



- 2 If you feel able, roll onto your hands and knees.



- 3 Crawl to something stable, like a chair.



- 4 Keep one knee down and bring one foot toward.



- 5 Use your arms and front foot to push up slowly.



- 6 Sit down and rest.

- 7 Let someone know you've had a fall.



Getting help

Telephones:

- Keep a phone somewhere easy to reach, not just in the hallway or kitchen.
- A mobile phone that stays with you can be a real help.
- Don't rush to answer a call.

Pendant alarms:

- These are available locally, often for a small charge.
- If you have one, try to wear it. It only works if it's with you.

Contact

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