

Slips, Trips and Falls



Advice And Helpful Hints on How to Avoid Slips, Trips and Falls

Telephone: 0300 124 5859



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If you have two or more falls within a six month period, we consider that you are risk of repeated falls.

Several medical conditions can cause falls, some of which are treatable. So if you start falling when previously you were steady on your feet, you need to see your Doctor to find out the cause.

Some of the possible causes are:

Medication

Medication can have some side-effects. In some cases they can cause falls, especially if you are taking more than four.

Examples of such medicines are:

- Blood pressure tablets
- Sleeping tablets and anti-depressant tablets
- Medication which affect the nerves and muscles
- Medication which can upset the beating of the heart

If you are taking any regular medicines and you start to have falls, please tell your Doctor. They will try to find out whether it due to any of the medicines or the way the medicine may be reacting together.

Low blood pressure, faints and dizziness

If blood pressure falls, especially on standing, getting up in the morning or getting out of a warm bath, it can cause blackouts, dizzy turns or a sense of weakness. Blood pressure medication can make these symptoms worse.

Any inner ear problem can cause a sense of the head or room spinning. This can affect your balance and therefore cause you to fall and is treatable with specific head and body movements that your Doctor can show you.

Muscles, Joints and Nerves

Weakness of muscles, sometimes due to problems with the nerves that supply them, can cause falls. Muscles themselves will be weak after any illness. If you have painful or swollen joints, they may make you unsteady on your feet. Sudden shooting pains, or joints giving way, may throw you off balance altogether.

Damage to the nerves in the feet can cause numbness and therefore affect your balance. An active lifestyle with regular exercise will help maintain fitness and balance.

Alcohol

Be aware that drinking over the recommended limits will worsen your balance and coordination, which will increase the risk of you falling.

Eyesight

Good eyesight is an important part of keeping your balance. Regular checks of your eyesight by an optician and necessary treatment of your eyes, will help to protect you from missing steps and falling over hazards.

Healthy Eating

Eating a healthy well balanced diet with regular meals plays an important part in keeping us fit and well. It is widely recognised that if you miss a meal you can feel dizzy and light-headed due to changes in your blood sugar levels and this can increase your risk of falling.

If you feel unable to eat a large meal try and eat little and often, as this will help maintain your sugar levels.

Your Doctor may review your medication, assess your blood pressure and can refer you to Physiotherapy or Occupational Therapy. You may be referred to a Falls Clinic in your area.

Make your home safe

Walkways

Think about removing hazardous rugs and mats. Avoid mats on hard floors unless secured as they can easily slip. Move any wires that are across walkways and keep areas free of clutter.

Lighting

Ensure that lighting is even and bright, especially on the stairs and between the bedroom and bathroom. It is a good idea to put the light on when going to the bathroom at night.

Stairs

Check stair treads are in good condition. Think about getting an extra stair rail fitted. Highlighting the edge of steps with tape can help.

Bathrooms

Use a non-slip mat in the bath and shower. Consider having a grab rail above the bath or in the shower. Outside your home.

Repair or replace uneven pathways

Get rid of slippery moss and cut back trailing plants on paths and patios. Consider grab handles at front and back doors.

Look around the outside of your home: are your pathways uneven, do they have moss or trailing plants on them? Consider making repairs and clearing the walkway. Would grab rails at the front and back door be helpful?

Avoid risk taking behaviour

Avoid using steps or standing on chairs and try to put things where they are easy to reach. Avoid clothes that are too long and could trip you up. Standing up is easier if chairs, beds and toilet are not too low. What around your home is stored at a high level? Could they be changed to a lower location? This would avoid the need to stand on chairs and ladders.

If you would like assistance to make your home safe, please talk to your Doctor, who will refer you for an Occupational Therapy assessment.

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