



The Facts about...

Avoiding Falls At Home

Why Worry about Falls at Home?

- 50% of people aged over 80 will have a fall every year.
- Over 60% of all falls actually happen at home.
- Falls are a serious cause of injury and - often more importantly - loss of confidence.

Reasons for Falling

Of course, there is no single reason for a fall. It is usually due to a combination of factors, often including:

- poor eyesight
- loss of muscle (and mobility)
- serious health conditions

Falls happen at home because people tend to move around without thinking about their safety.

Many falls could be prevented by making simple changes to the home as well as by making some simple personal and lifestyle changes.

Keeping Active

Simple exercises to build strength, flexibility and balance can easily be done at home. The goals of such exercises should be to build

- Strength - to maintain muscle mass
- Balance - to maintain steadiness on the feet
- Flexibility - to maintain freedom of movement

Age UK has a helpful booklet which gives a simple routine using just a chair and an elastic exercise band (available from sports shops). It can be found on www.ageuk.org.uk under Documents - Strength and Balance Training. The NHS website also has a helpful section with an exercise plan - <http://www.nhs.uk/Tools/Pages/Exercises-for-older-people.aspx>

Note

- Older people should always check with their doctor before starting an exercise routine.
- Make sure that you have a sturdy chair or person nearby to hold on to if you feel unsteady.

Keeping Safe

Do an audit of your own home, looking for any slip and trip hazards, such as:

- Clutter which can be removed
- Rugs or carpets that are not secured to the floor
- Trailing phone or lamp cords
- Areas where wet floors could become slippery

Ensure that furniture is arranged to allow free and safe passage around the home.

Consider whether grab-rails or handrails could be installed if necessary, particularly in entrances and bathrooms.

Have a look at the lighting - is it sufficient or could it be improved?

Light switches at both top and bottom of staircases can help.

People with poor eyesight may find it helpful to fix white strips on each step, making them easier to see.

Ensure that there is a lamp within easy reach of the bed.

Night lights, which are plugged in at floor-level and emit a gentle light can help to show the way to the bathroom in the middle of the night.

It's also a good idea to keep a torch by the bed in case of power cuts.

Finally, consider whether frequently-used items are easily accessible. This particularly applies to the kitchen, where keeping things within easy reach may need a bit of adjustment and rearrangement.

If you are in doubt, it is always possible to ask an Occupational Therapist to visit your home and give advice.

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This fact sheet should only be used as a guideline and we recommend you seek professional advice.