

# Falls

Every year about a third of people over 65 slip, trip or fall. 10–25% of falls lead to a serious injury such as a broken bone. Falls are not just the result of getting older, but falls amongst older people are more common because of muscle weakness and a reduced sense of balance.

## Why do people fall?

There are many factors that can contribute to a fall:

- Medical conditions such as high or low blood pressure, heart conditions, Parkinson's Disease or a previous stroke
- Walking difficulties
- Certain types of medicines or taking more than 4 different medications
- Dizziness or light-headedness
- Hazards such as loose rugs, trailing wires and clutter
- Unsuitable footwear
- Poor eyesight or hearing
- Reduced confidence
- Memory problems

## What treatment might you be offered?

Not all falls are preventable, however, there are certain things that can be done that may reduce how often you fall. Your GP may review your medication or refer you for further medical investigations, to a specialist Falls service or to a Falls and Balance Group. Your GP may request a specialist assessment in your own home by a Physiotherapist or Occupational Therapist who may:

- Teach you exercises to improve your strength and balance
- Provide you with appropriate walking aids
- Provide you with assistive equipment or adaptations to help you with day to day tasks
- Provide advice on how to cope following a fall

## What can I do to help myself?

### Make your home safer

Simple changes can make a difference:

- Keep walkways free of clutter
- Remove loose rugs or trailing wires
- Ensure your home is well lit and use the brightest bulbs available
- Keep a light by your bed and ensure your room is well lit when getting out of bed at night
- Fit hand-rails or grab-rails where needed on stairs, steps and in the bathroom
- Avoid carrying loads up or down stairs and keep your stairs clutter free
- Avoid standing on chairs and stools and keep things within easy reach
- Use a non-slip mat in the bath

### Some other things to consider:

- Wear low heeled well fitting footwear and look after your feet
- Avoid long trailing clothing
- Have your eyesight and hearing checked regularly
- Do not rush to answer the door or telephone
- Stand up slowly from the bed or chair and get your balance before you set off
- If you experience any dizziness, loss of balance or black-outs ensure you inform your GP
- Wear a pendant alarm
- Eat regularly and ensure you have a balanced diet including foods rich in calcium and vitamin D for healthy bones.
- Drink 6-8 hot or cold drinks a day (non-alcoholic)

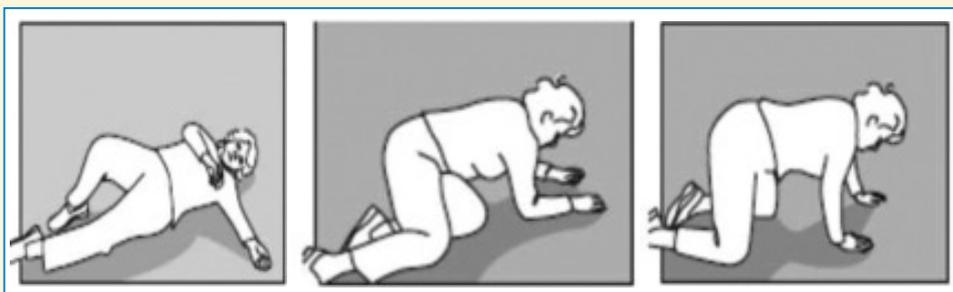
- Keep active and avoid sitting for long periods
- Ensure you use your walking aids appropriately and check them for wear and tear.
- If you feel you would benefit from a walking aid then contact your GP

## What should I do if I have a fall?

The first thing you should do is rest for a few minutes to recover from the shock of falling. Don't move if you feel pain or know that you have hurt yourself.

If you are unable to get up attract attention by shouting or banging on the floor. Try to use your pendant alarm or telephone if you can reach it easily and safely and call for help. Keep yourself warm by covering yourself with anything within your reach e.g. rug or blanket. Try to place something underneath you if you are on a hard or cold surface. Move the parts of your body that don't hurt to help your circulation, improve comfort and reduce pressure on your bony parts.

If you are not hurt and able to get up slowly roll onto your hands and knees and crawl to a stable piece of furniture that you can use to help you up.



Use the furniture for support and get up from your knees. If possible, sit down on a chair for a while before you stand up.



After a fall – you should tell your GP or seek medical advice.

## Contact details

There are many people who may provide advice and information to reduce your risk of falling. Here are some of the organisations who can support you:

**Age UK** – 0113 389 3001

**Care and Repair** – 0113 240 6009

**Leeds Telecare Service** – 0113 378 3290/1

**William Merritt Disabled Living Centre** – 0113 350 8989

**Access Bus** – 0113 348 1903

**Older People's Forum (Neighbourhood Network Schemes)** – 0113 244 1697

**Community Falls Service** – referral through your GP

## Help us get it right

If you have a complaint, concern, comment or compliment please let us know by speaking to a member of our staff. We learn from your feedback and use the information to improve and develop our services.

If you would like to talk to someone outside the service contact the **Patient Experience Team** on **0113 220 8585**, Monday to Friday 9.30am to 4.30pm or email [Ich.pet@nhs.net](mailto:Ich.pet@nhs.net)

**We can make this information available in Braille, large print, audio or other languages on request.**