

## Falls prevention

### What to do if you fall

If you have tripped, slipped or fallen before, you may be more likely to fall again. However, many falls can easily be prevented so that you can continue to stay strong, steady and independent.

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### How to get up safely after a fall

#### The Up and About Plan

If you are not hurt, the Up and About Plan is one of the safe ways to get up after a fall.

- Roll onto your hands and knees and crawl to a stable piece of furniture such as a bed, stool or chair.
- Use your hands to support you, place one foot flat on the floor and bend your knee in front of your tummy.
- Lean forward and push on your feet and hands until you bring the other foot to be beside the first.
- Turn and sit on the bed, stool or chair. Rest for a while before moving off.

If you fall regularly it is recommended that you ask for a physiotherapist assessment to identify the most appropriate way to get up.

[ROSPA](#) have some advice on falls prevention and a video on [YouTube](#) about 'How to get up safely after a fall'.

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### What to do if you can't get up after a fall

Try not to panic if you have a fall. You should wait for help if you feel pain or if you're unable to get up on your own.

#### The Rest and Wait Plan

- **Try to summon help** – Use a [pendant alarm](#) if you have one, bang on the wall, call out for help, or crawl towards the telephone.
- **Move to a soft surface** – If you have fallen on a hard floor, try to move to a carpeted area.
- **Keep warm** – Try to reach for something to cover yourself with and try to move out of any draughts.

- **Keep moving** – Do not lie in one position for too long, as you may suffer from pressure sores or get cold. Roll from side to side and move your arms and legs, if possible.
  - **Toileting** – If you need to empty your bladder while on the floor, use a newspaper or item of clothing to soak up the wet, and try to move away from the wet area.
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## What to do after a fall

### Tell your Doctor or GP

You should tell your doctor about any fall, particularly if you were unable to get up by yourself. This is very important, as if you have had one fall you may be more likely to fall again. With the help of your doctor and other services you may be able to prevent this happening.

[Community Health & Social Care Direct](#) can provide information, advice or support, including carrying out an assessment to see what [equipment or aids](#) might help you to continue to live independently in your home.

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## Why do older people fall?

There are lots of reasons why some people are more likely to fall, however it is often a combination of reasons that lead to a fall.

- **Balance** – you are more likely to fall if you have weak muscles and poor balance.
  - **Medication** – some medicines can cause problems with balance or dizziness
  - **Poor eyesight**
  - **Poor home safety** – for example trailing wires, clutter on the stairs, and standing on chairs or stools to reach high or awkward places.
  - **Ear problems** – some ear infections such as **Labyrinthitis** can cause dizziness and affect your balance
  - Blackouts or dizziness – a particular problem can be a drop in blood pressure when getting up from a bed or a chair, known as postural hypotension.
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## How can I reduce the risk of a fall?

### Improve your balance

[Keeping physically active](#) is a good way to make your muscles stronger and to improve balance. Regular exercise is also good for easing the pain and swelling that arthritis causes.

[Staying Steady classes](#) run by [Healthworks](#) help to improve balance and reduce falls in the home. The classes also provide an opportunity to make new friends.

[Jesmond Pool and Gym](#) run many exercise classes for the over 50s.

[Tai Chi](#) and [yoga](#) have been shown to help improve balance and strength in older people.

[FutureLearn](#) run a free online course called [Ageing Well: Falls](#) which explores why people fall,

helps to discover practical methods to reduce the risk of falling and recognise when to seek expert help.

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### **Wear appropriate clothing and footwear**

You are more likely to slip or trip if you are wearing:

- Slippers that are loose or have no back
- Sandals
- Shoes with heels
- Flared trousers
- Clothing that trails on the ground

You should try to wear flat shoes or shoes with thin soles or a built-in heel. Also, remember not to walk on slippery floors in socks or tights.

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### **Have a balanced diet with calcium and vitamin D**

**Healthy eating and drinking** with plenty of calcium and vitamin D is important to keep your bones strong. Calcium is found in dairy products such as milk, cheese and yoghurt.

Vitamin D is found in:

- meat, sardines, tuna and other oily fish.
- many fat spreads and breakfast cereals have vitamin D added to them
- sunlight on the skin produces vitamin D

**Osteoporosis** can result in broken bones from a minor bump or fall.

If you have any of the following risk factors for osteoporosis, ask your doctor about treatments to strengthen your bones:

- long-term use of corticosteroid tablets;
  - early menopause (before the age of 45 years old);
  - testosterone deficiency in men;
  - low body weight or you have a very slight build;
  - smoking; or
  - previous fragility fracture.
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### **Report problems with pavements or street lighting**

Problems with paving stones and street lighting may increase the risk of you having a fall. You can report issues or repairs in your neighbourhood to [\*\*Envirocall at Newcastle City Council\*\*](#).

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## Check your eyesight

Have your eyes tested regularly at an [Opticians](#) at least every two years. Eye tests are free to people aged over 60 years old.

If you need glasses for reading and for distance it is best to have two separate pairs of glasses. Bifocals or vari-focals are not as safe, as they can distort your vision when looking up or down.

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## Check your medicines

Some medicines can make you dizzy and can increase your risk of a fall.

If you are taking more than four kinds of prescribed medication your doctor should check them regularly. This is known as a medication review. Alcohol should also be avoided with some medicines, as it can make you dizzy and can cause you to lose your balance.

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## Standing up safely

Getting out of bed, or getting up from a chair you have been sitting in for a long time, can be a problem if you stand up too quickly. Your blood pressure can drop suddenly, called postural hypotension, and can make you feel light-headed.

Try sitting up for a few minutes after lying down before you stand up, and also by swinging your legs and tapping your toes to get your blood pumping before standing up.

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## Tips for preventing falls in your home

This checklist will help you identify hazards and reduce the risks that can contribute to you falling in your own home.

- **When you walk through a room, do you have to walk around furniture?** – Move things so that your path is clear. Remember to always use any walking aids safely and ask for help with moving large items.
- **Are there papers, magazines, books, shoes, boxes, blankets, towels, or other objects on the floor?** – Pick up things that are on the floor and always keep objects off the floor. A 'ready reacher' may reduce you having to stoop or over reach.
- **Do you have to walk over or around cords or wires?** – Coil or tape cords and wires next to the wall so that you can't trip over them. If possible, have an electrician put in another socket.
- **Do you have a letterbox cage to avoid you stooping to pick up your letters?** – They are easy to fit and will also stop papers being spread across the floor just inside the doorway which could make you slip.
- **Do you have castors under your chairs, which makes them likely to slide as you get up?** – Remove the castors or fit cup-shaped carpet savers underneath them.
- **Do you have loose rugs or runners on the floor?** – Remove the rugs or runners, or use double-sided adhesive carpet tape to prevent them from slipping.
- **If you fall do you have a system for calling assistance?** – [Personal Alarm System](#) or [telecare](#)

is a good way of doing this.

- **Is there a light that you can turn on and off from your bed?** – Position a lamp that you can reach from your bed or a pull cord near to your bed for the main light.
- **Are your staircases and landings well lit?** – 100 watt light bulbs are recommended if the light fitting is capable of taking one of that size.
- **Are your carpets in good condition and not frayed?** – Consider replacing worn carpets as they are a major cause of serious falls, especially on stairs.
- **Are the edges of each step easy to see?** – A strip of white masking tape on the edge of each stair will help you if your eyesight is poor. It must be kept in good condition and not allowed to become a tripping hazard.
- **Do you have a non-slip mat in the bath or shower?** – Non-slip rubberised mats are can be bought in many shops
- **Is everything within easy reach without stretching or climbing on a chair or a stool?** – Stretching and reaching above head height can make you feel dizzy and there is a temptation to climb up on chairs to reach something. Things which are used regularly should be on the lower shelves.

[Your Equipment Newcastle](#) provides advice on daily living equipment. You will be guided through a step-by-step self-assessment to find and buy equipment.

[Reliable Tradespeople](#) – if you are unable to carry out small repairs to your home you can find services that have been checked and vetted to do the work for you.

[Home adaptations, equipment and aids](#) – if you need to make some changes to your home you can find out more about services that can help here.

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## Other Useful Information

- [Staying Steady](#) – guide from Age UK
- The Academic Health Science Network for North East and North Cumbria (AHSN NENC) has created a short film and a dedicated webpage to provide older people and their families with practical tips to avoid falls. The film is available on [You Tube](#) or you can also [download](#) the film to your system.

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## Useful Organisations

**Patient Information Centre – Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust (CNTW)**

**Website:** [www.cntw.nhs.uk](http://www.cntw.nhs.uk)

**Telephone:** 0191 246 7288

**Address:** St Nicholas Hospital, NE3 3XT

## Community Health and Social Care Direct – Newcastle City Council

**Email:** [scd@newcastle.gov.uk](mailto:scd@newcastle.gov.uk)

**Website:** <http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/adult-social-care>

**Telephone:** 0191 278 8377

## Healthworks

**Email:** [enquiries@hwn.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@hwn.org.uk)

**Website:** <https://www.healthworksnewcastle.org.uk>

**Telephone:** 0191 272 4244

**Address:** West End Health Resource Centre, NE4 8BE

## The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)

**Email:** [help@rospa.com](mailto:help@rospa.com)

**Website:** <http://www.rospa.com>

**Telephone:** 0121 248 2000

**Address:** RoSPA House, B15 1RP

## FutureLearn

**Email:** [feedback@futurelearn.com](mailto:feedback@futurelearn.com)

**Website:** <https://www.futurelearn.com>

**Telephone:** 0121 248 2000

**Address:** FutureLearn Limited, NW1 2DB

## Your Equipment Newcastle

**Website:** <https://www.youequipmentnewcastle.org.uk/>

**Telephone:** 0121 248 2000

**Address:** Adult Social Care, NE1 8AQ

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## Related Articles

[Home adaptations, equipment and aids](#)

[Personal alarm systems and telecare](#)

[Opticians](#)

[Osteoporosis](#)

[While you are in hospital](#)

[Leaving hospital](#)

[Urgent medical help from NHS 111](#)

[Sight Loss and Visual Impairments](#)

[Healthy feet](#)

[Benefits of being physically active](#)

[Healthy eating and drinking](#)

[Getting repairs and decorating done](#)

[Making your home safer](#)

[How to pay for adaptations to your home](#)