

PATIENT INFORMATION

Reducing Falls at Home

Advice for patients, relatives and carers

Falls— the facts

Falls are very common, 1 in 3 over 65 year olds and 1 in 2 over 80 year olds will have a fall each year.

Falls can cause serious injury and admission to hospital, but there are many things that can be done to reduce risks within your home.

This leaflet aims to highlight the risk factors thereby working towards minimising the consequences and incidence of falling whilst at home. This leaflet provides you with actions that you can take to reduce your risk of falls.

Risk factors

1. General health problems, medications, dizziness and fainting
2. Footwear and foot health
3. Environment
4. Nutrition and fluid intake
5. Mobility, strength and balance
6. Memory problems, confusion and difficulty understanding
7. Continence
8. Visual and hearing impairments
9. Previous falls

1. General health problems, medications, dizziness and fainting

- Inform your GP if you are experiencing any dizzy spells and of any recent changes to your general health.
- Get regular general health check-ups with your GP (for blood pressure and osteoporosis).

- Ask for your medications to be reviewed by your GP annually. This is especially important if you are taking more than 4 medications.
- When buying medications inform the pharmacist of all prescribed and over the counter medications that you are taking.
- Always take your medications at the recommended time and the prescribed dose. If you miss a dose do not take a double dose.

2. Footwear and foot health

- Wear well fitting, fully enclosed, low heeled footwear/slippers.
- Avoid wearing loose or worn out footwear.
- Examine your feet regularly and get check-ups with your GP or chiropodist if you are concerned about anything.
- Diabetics should be especially careful about their foot health and look out for cold or numb feet.

3. Previous falls

- If you have had previous falls you may be entitled to a falls assessment (which will include looking further at the risk factors discussed in this leaflet), please contact your GP.
- If you are at risk of falling or have had previous falls, a personal/pendant alarm can offer you peace of mind, so that you can easily summon help if you fall and cannot get to the telephone.

4. Environment

- Remove trip hazards such as loose rugs and wires.
- Reduce any unnecessary clutter.
- If possible get help to rearrange the furniture so that you can easily move around.
- Ensure areas are well lit, especially at night time when moving around.
- Avoid standing on stools or chairs.
- Be wary of pets.

- Clear up any spillages immediately.
- If you need adaptations such as hand rails then consider an Occupational Therapy assessment (contact Customer First - details on the back of this leaflet).

5. Nutrition and fluid intake

- Eat regularly and avoid missing meals.
- Try to eat a balanced diet especially foods which are good for your bones such as: dairy produce, eggs and green leafy vegetables.
- Aim to drink at least 8 cups of fluid every day, ideally water. Dehydration is a very common cause of hospital admission and can contribute to dizziness and weakness.
- Avoid or limit alcohol intake.
- If you have recently lost weight please contact your GP or dentist for oral hygiene and denture care.

6. Mobility, strength and balance

- If you have been issued a walking aid, please use it.
- If you feel that your walking or balance has deteriorated please contact your GP for a referral to a Physiotherapist.
- Rest regularly during activities e.g. place chairs where you might need them to rest on.
- Prioritise your daily activities, only do the tasks that are most important that day.
- Remaining physically active is one of the best ways to reduce the risk of falls.
- There are exercise classes in the local area to help you maintain your independence, please contact Age UK (details on the back page).

7. Memory problems, confusion and difficulty understanding

- If you are having trouble remembering things then please contact your GP and they may refer you to the memory clinic.
- If you feel that you have been more confused than normal then please share your concerns with a friend or relative, who may contact your GP.

- If you experience any changes in mood, be aware that this can affect your mobility and please contact your GP.

8. Continence

- Allow extra time to get to the toilet, as rushing can contribute to falls.
- If you are experiencing any incontinence, speak to your GP who can refer you to the specialist continence nurse.
- There is equipment available if you are experiencing difficulties in getting to the toilet; please speak to your GP.

9. Visual and hearing impairments

- Wear your glasses and hearing aids, especially when moving around; problems with your hearing can affect your balance and cause falls.
- Ensure regular eye and ear check-ups (at least once a year) be aware that many opticians will visit you in your own home.
- Be aware that changes in your glasses prescriptions especially bifocals can change how close things look and therefore cause falls.
- Avoid moving around in the dark, use a night light or touch lamp.

Contact numbers

Suffolk

- Age UK: 01473 351234
- Care Co-ordination Centre (CCC) 0300 123 2425
- Social Services (Customer First) 0808 800 4005

Norfolk

- Age UK 01603 787111
- Single Point of Access (CCC) 01953 609409
- Social Services (Care Connect) 0344 800 8020

Cambridgeshire

- Age UK 0300 666 9860

- Social Services 0345 045 5202

Essex

- Age UK 01245 346 106
- Social Services 0845 603 7630

**Call NHS 111 for medical advice
(when it is not a 999 emergency)**

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the disabledgo website link below:

<http://www.disabledgo.com/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust/main>

I have had a fall

I feel able to try and get up



Ease yourself up onto your elbows



Move onto your hands and knees



Hold onto a firm surface to support you



Facing the firm surface ease yourself to a standing position



Turn yourself gently and sit on a firm surface



Sit down and rest before trying to move

Please do not attempt this if you have had a hip or knee replacement in the last 6 weeks unless taught by a physiotherapist

I can't get up

Can I attract attention?

- Shout for help
- Bang on something
- Press your pendant alarm
- Use your telephone if you can reach

Can I get comfortable?

- Find a nearby pillow, cushion or item of clothing to put under your head

Can I keep warm?

- Cover yourself with clothing, tablecloth or rug

Can I keep moving?

- Move position to avoid getting pressure sores
- Move joints to avoid stiffness and help circulation
- Roll away from a damp area if your bladder 'lets go'

Tell your GP or Health Professional about your fall