



Falls prevention



There are things you can do to help reduce your risk of falls including doing physical activity, managing your medications and making your home and surroundings as safe as possible.

At least one third of people aged 65 years and over fall one or more times a year. While many falls do not result in injury, nearly 1 in 5 require medical attention or hospitalisation. Even falls that don't cause injury can shake your confidence, and concerns about falling can stop you from doing activities that you enjoy.

If you are concerned about falling, have had a fall, know someone who has, or feel unsteady on your feet, there are many things you can do to build your confidence and stay active.

Reducing your risk of falls

There are many things you can do to help you stay independent and prevent your risk of falls.



Your balance

You can improve your balance and coordination by being physically active and doing exercises that challenge your balance. Ask an exercise physiologist or physiotherapist about how to challenge your balance.



Your bones and muscles

A balanced diet and weight bearing exercises are important to maintain good health, strong bones and muscles, as well as provide enough daily energy. Make sure you have good vitamin D levels for strong bones and muscles.



Your feet

Looking after your feet can help you stay active and independent. Foot problems are not a normal part of getting older and may be the first sign of more serious medical conditions.

You can take care of your feet by wearing shoes that are appropriate for your feet and suit the activities you do. They should be wide enough in the toe area, have low or no heels and have non-slip soles. Have regular podiatry checks to reduce foot problems.



Your eyesight

Our eyes change as we get older and can make it harder to see or adjust to changes in light. Early detection can improve eye health – 75% of eye conditions are preventable or treatable. Get your eyes checked by an optometrist every 2 years.



Your medications

Have regular check-ups with your doctor or health professional to help ensure your medical conditions are being managed.



To support you to get active to reduce your risk of falling, talk to a **Get Healthy Service** health coach on 1300 806 258 or visit www.gethealthynsw.com.au

Physical activity

The more active we are, the better our chance of keeping our balance steady, our muscles strong and our joints flexible.

Improving your balance is one of the best things you can do to reduce your risk of falls. You can try simple at-home activities such as:

- standing on 1 leg or walking heel-to-toe
- rising from a chair without using your hands
- Tai Chi or structured balance training programs.

Falls prevention programs can help you learn ways to improve your balance and strength from qualified exercise professionals.



You can search for group exercise programs and fall prevention programs in your local area on the NSW Active and Healthy website: activeandhealthy.nsw.gov.au

All fall prevention programs will have the "FP" symbol next to its listing.

Improve safety in and around your home

- Have good **lighting**, especially between the bedroom and the bathroom at night and near any internal steps or stairs.
- Make sure **walkways and corridors** are kept clear and well lit.
- Check that **mats and rugs** are secure and have no tears or wrinkles. Put sticky strips on all mats and rugs or remove them.
- Install **grab rails** near steps and in the bathroom (towel rails are not strong enough to use as grab rails).
- Mark the leading edge of outdoor **steps** (for example, with white paint) so they are easy to see.
- Fix broken, uneven or cracked **paths**, patios and other walking surfaces. Report cracked footpaths to your local council.



Tip

Ask an occupational therapist about ways to make your home safer.



My Aged Care can help you access aged care services and information such as:

- the different types of aged care services available
- your eligibility for services
- referrals to service providers that can meet your needs
- your contribution to the cost of your aged care.

To be eligible for My Aged Care you need to be aged 65 or over or 50 years or over for Aboriginal people.

For more information and to register an account with My Aged Care, visit myagedcare.gov.au or call **1800 200 422** (weekdays 8am to 8pm and Saturday 10am to 2pm).



Medication management

Medications bought with or without a prescription come in many forms including tablets, capsules, skin patches, liquids, eye drops, sprays, inhalers, creams, suppositories and injections. Consider all medicines you take, including those prescribed by a doctor or bought from a pharmacy, supermarket or health food store such as natural or complementary products.

Taking certain types of medicines, or a combination of medicines, can have side effects that can make you dizzy or drowsy which can increase your risk of falls.

Falls are more likely when taking medication for:

- anxiety
- depression
- sleeping difficulties.

Manage your medicines safely and effectively. Take them exactly as prescribed and have them reviewed annually by a health professional.



Tip

Webster packs are containers that set out all the medications needed for each particular time of day. A Webster pack can help you remember to take the right medicine at the right time.



Tip

Make a list of all medicines you take and show your doctor or pharmacist.

Medication List

What you need:

- ☒ Name of medication
- ☒ Dose
- ☒ How much
- ☒ How often and when
- ☒ Why I take it
- ☒ Allergies

What to do if you fall at home

Planning what to do in the event of a fall can help you feel prepared and can help your family and friends feel reassured.

Have a plan to get help

A good emergency plan will involve how to call for help and how the help will get to you.

- **Protect yourself** by considering a device that raises an alarm in case of emergency.
- **Have a phone, autodialler, portable alarm or intercom system within reach** on a low table, in case it is hard to get up.
- **Know who to call for help.** Keep a list of the phone numbers of family or friends near the phone or save them into your phone for quick access.
- **Let trusted family and friends know how to get into your home** if you're unable to get up to let them in. You could leave a spare key with a friend, neighbour or relative who lives nearby or in a combination box outside.



Tip

Try to make contact with someone daily.

If you have a fall at home:

1. Don't panic, stay still for a few minutes and try to stay calm.
2. Check your body. If you are not badly injured you can think about getting up. If you cannot get up, call for help. **Dial triple zero (000)** for emergency services.

If you can get up by yourself:

1. Roll onto your side and try to get into a crawling position.
2. Crawl to a stable piece of furniture, like a lounge chair, sofa or bed.
3. Get up onto your knees and hold firmly onto the furniture.
4. Push up, using your strongest leg and arms.
5. Sit down on the furniture until you can move safely.

If you can't get up by yourself:

1. Try to crawl or drag yourself to find anything that can keep you warm, such as a blanket, a towel or clothing, while you wait for help.
2. Use your personal alarm, if you have one or use an object that you can bang to make a loud noise, like a walking stick, against the wall to alert a neighbour.
3. Keep warm and wait for help to arrive. If you can, try to get up again later.



Important

If you have a fall, see your doctor to check for injuries and to assess if there was a medical cause for the fall.

