

Falls Prevention

There are ways you can reduce your risk of having a fall, including making simple changes to your home and doing exercises to improve your strength and balance.

If you have fallen in the past, making changes to reduce your chances of having a fall can also help you overcome any fear of falling.

Some older people may be reluctant to seek help and advice from their GP and other support services about preventing falls because they believe their concerns will not be taken seriously.

But all healthcare professionals take falls in older people very seriously because of the significant impact they can have on a person's health.

Discuss any falls you have had with your GP and say if it's had any impact on your health and wellbeing. Your GP can carry out some simple balance tests to check whether you're at an increased risk of falling in the future. They can also refer you to useful services in your local area.

Avoiding falls at home

Tips for preventing falls in the home include:

- immediately mopping up spillages
- removing clutter, trailing wires and frayed carpet
- using non-slip mats and rugs
- using high-wattage light bulbs in lamps and torches so you can see clearly
- organising your home so that climbing, stretching and bending are kept to a minimum, and to avoid bumping into things
- getting help to do things you're unable to do safely on your own
- not walking on slippery floors in socks or tights
- not wearing loose-fitting, trailing clothes that might trip you up
- wearing well-fitting shoes that are in good condition and support the ankle
- [taking care of your feet](#) by trimming your toenails regularly and seeing a GP or chiropodist about any foot problems.

Strength and balance training

Doing regular [strength exercises](#) and [balance exercises](#) can improve your strength and balance, and reduce your risk of having a fall. This can take the form of simple activities such as [walking](#) and [dancing](#), or specialist training programmes.

Many community centres and local gyms offer specialist training programmes for older people. Exercises that can be carried out at home are also available. Ask your GP about training programmes in your area. It's important that a strength and balance training programme is tailored to the individual and monitored by an appropriately trained professional.

There's also evidence that taking part in regular tai chi sessions can reduce the risk of falls. [Tai chi](#) is a Chinese martial art that places particular emphasis on movement, balance and co-ordination.

Unlike other martial arts, tai chi does not involve physical contact or rapid physical movements, making it an ideal activity for older people.

Read more about [physical activity guidance for older adults](#).

Medication review

If you're taking long-term medication, your GP should review your medicines at least once a year to make sure they're still right for you.

It's particularly important that your medicines are reviewed if you're taking 4 or more medicines a day.

Your GP may recommend alternative medication or lower doses if they feel the side effects increase your chances of having a fall. In some cases, it may be possible for the medication to be stopped.

See your GP or practice nurse if you have not had your medication reviewed for more than a year, or if you're concerned that the medicines you or a relative are taking may increase the risk of falling.

Sight tests

Make an appointment to have a [sight test](#) if you're concerned that [poor vision](#) (even when wearing glasses) is increasing your risk of having a fall.

[Find an optician near you](#)

Not all vision problems can be cured, but some problems can be treated with surgery – for example, [cataracts](#) can be removed using [cataract surgery](#).

Home hazard assessment

You can request a home hazard assessment if you're concerned that you or a relative may be at risk of having a fall, or if you know someone who has recently had a fall.

As well as identifying potential hazards, the aim of a home hazard assessment is to explore how a person's actual use of the environment affects their risk of falling.

A healthcare professional with experience in fall prevention will visit you or your relative's home to identify potential hazards and advise on how to deal with them.

For example, as the bathroom is a common place where falls occur, many older people can benefit from having bars fitted to the inside of their bath to make it easier for them to get in and out.

Fitting a [personal alarm system](#) may also be recommended so that you or your relative can signal for help in the event of a fall.

An alternative would be to always keep a mobile phone in your pocket so you can phone for help after having a fall.

Contact your GP or local authority to ask about the help available in your area. You can [find your local authority](#) on the GOV.UK website.

Alcohol

Drinking [alcohol](#) can lead to loss of co-ordination and exaggerate the effects of some medicines. This can significantly increase the risk of a fall, particularly in older people. Avoiding alcohol or reducing the amount you drink can reduce your risk of having a fall. Excessive drinking can also contribute to the development of [osteoporosis](#).