

Steady on your feet: Beat falls, trips and slips



Do you want to stay steady on your feet? Of course you do. We can help.

We are all at risk of falling, tripping or slipping over. Even if we feel healthy, our risk of falling increases as we get older. Each year one in three people over the age of 65 falls and about half of the people aged 80 or over fall at least once each year.

If you are worried about falling, talk to us or your health professionals. It doesn't have to affect your life, your independence or stop you from doing the things you love.

The good news is that most falls can be prevented, it isn't part of getting older. We hope this information helps you to take action to prevent a fall.

Why would I fall over?



If you have already fallen over, you are more likely to fall over again, so be extra careful.

There are many reasons why people fall over.

We have listed some of the most common below.

1. **Blood pressure** can sometimes drop when you stand up, turn around, bend down or are walking, making you feel faint and dizzy. Sometime this could be caused by other conditions; always discuss this with a health professional.
2. **Difficulty walking**, sitting down, getting up, turning over, transferring or problems with your balance.
3. **Medications**, particularly those for arthritis, stroke, Parkinson's, diabetes, high blood pressure, depressions, sleeping problems and heart conditions can all increase the risk of falling. Taking multiple medicines may also increase the risk.
4. **Poor eye sight and/or hearing** so make sure you have regular tests and use your glasses and/or hearing aid.
5. **Long-term conditions and reduced sensation in your feet** can contribute to falling.
6. **Home environment** and things like poor lighting, rugs and clutter can increase your risk of falling.
7. **Foot problems and pain** such as corns, ulcers, long toenails and poorly fitting shoes/slippers.
8. **Not drinking enough water** can cause problems. Women should drink 1.6 litres (three pints) a day and men 2 litres (four pints).
9. **Fear of falling**, for many people fear of falling stops them doing activities of daily living. Rehab and anxiety management can improve confidence and fear of falling.

If you find yourself on the floor and you can't remember what happened, see your GP as soon as you can. If you are hurt, get urgent help.

Osteoporosis

Not all falls result in injury but many do, unfortunately commonly a fall can result in broken bones. Osteoporosis is a condition where bones become fragile and can break more easily.

Consider taking the Royal Osteoporosis Society osteoporosis risk checker and get a personalised report on your bone health in just five minutes.

- Osteoporosis risk checker (theros.org.uk)

This tool can help warn you if you are at higher risk of osteoporosis, sooner, and can help you make positive changes to keep your bones strong and healthy. You will receive tailored advice about your osteoporosis risk, as well as lifestyle advice, and if you need further advice, this tool can help you start a conversation with your GP or health professional, who may be able to request further investigations and treatment options.

What can I change or do to help?



Firstly, if you have already fallen it's important to tell your health professional. There is no need to be embarrassed, we are here to help.

Wear the right clothes and shoes...

Wear sensible, comfortable shoes with a low heel. They should fit comfortably around the heel, have room for your toes to wiggle, a thin sole and good grip. Laces, Velcro or shoes with a buckle are good.

When you walk, make sure you pick your feet up. Don't shuffle as although this might make you feel safer, it actually increases your risk of falling.

Try not to wear clothes that drag on the floor, such as long trousers, skirts or nightdresses, which may cause you to trip.

Get your eyes and hearing checked...

Poor eyesight and hearing doesn't have to be 'part of getting older'. Make sure you have regular eye and hearing tests. It's always good to check for things like glaucoma and cataracts. If you need glasses or a hearing aid make sure you wear them and keep them clean and in good working order. Take extra care if you wear bifocals.

Don't rush...

Never rush for the toilet, bus or to get to the front of a queue! Lots of people fall during the night because they are in a hurry to get to the bathroom... in the dark.

If you are worried about incontinence, speak to your health professionals. The team sees and talks to people with incontinence everyday so there is no need to be worried or embarrassed.

Eat and drink enough...

Making sure you get the right nutrients is really important. Eat regularly and avoid long periods without food, especially if you have another health condition. If you don't feel hungry try eating little and often. Vitamin D and calcium rich food may help if you are at risk of osteoporosis.

Make sure you drink enough and have a good variety of food in your diet, including fruit and vegetables.

Alcohol can make anyone unsteady but especially as we get older. It interacts with medication you may be taking, so be extra careful if you have had a drink and don't have more than the recommended amount.

Have a medication review...

Book an appointment with your GP or pharmacist for your annual medication review or if you have started taking a new medication. Make that call sooner if you have any concerns, are taking high doses or multiple medications. Also speak to your GP if you are having side effects that may increase your risk of falling, such as dizziness or feeling tired.

Changes at home



Get those lights on...

Keep stairs and living areas well lit.

If you get up during the night always put a light on and if you need your glasses, keep them on your bedside table. If you get up frequently, consider leaving the hall or landing light on during the night or keep a good torch by the bed.

Have a tidy up and a de-clutter...

Keep your floor clear of clutter and try not to keep items on the floor in the hallway. Check that carpets are secure, with door bars to adjoining rooms. Ask someone to help if carpets need re-fitting.

If you have rugs, make sure they have a good non-slip underlay so you don't trip on the edges.

Consider getting rid of rugs and mats that aren't necessary.

Keep cables tidy and make sure they are not trailing across the floor

Be safe on the stairs...

Never leave things on the stairs as you may trip on them.

Make sure the hallway, stairs and landing are well lit and consider getting a handrail fitted if you don't have one. Take it steady, especially coming down the stairs.

If you wear bifocal glasses, take extra care. People who wear these tend to fall more often on the stairs than those who don't.

If you use a walking aid, ensure you have them to use upstairs and downstairs separately. Do not carry them with you on the stairs; speak to a health professional if you need additional equipment at home.

Going to the bathroom...

Be careful not to slip on the floor when getting in and out of the shower or bath. A raised toilet seat or rails may also help if you are unsteady when getting up. Talk to your occupational therapist about this. If the floor gets wet, wipe it up straightaway so you don't forget and slip later.

Who's that...

Don't rush to answer the phone or door. If it's important they will wait or call back. If you haven't got one already, set up an answer phone or get a cordless phone.

Having a second phone somewhere else in the house can also be helpful – lots of second units don't need to be plugged into a

phone socket nowadays. Also consider getting a mobile phone for emergencies.

Pets...

People often say they trip over their pets. Make sure their beds and toys are tidy and consider getting a bright collar and/or bell so you can see and hear them. If you are worried about walking or caring for your dog consider using a local petcare and/or walking service.

In an emergency...

Think about having a personal alarm system fitted. You can wear a wrist band or pendant with a button you push in an emergency. If you have one, make sure you wear it and check it monthly.

Outside your home...

Make sure that steps, paths and driveways are clear from clutter, rubbish, moss and leaves, which can be extremely slippery. Also check for damage, such as loose stones or cracks in paths, which could cause you to trip.

Keep front and back doors and your garage well lit. Rails may help you.

If you need to carry out any repairs to your home, your local council may be able to recommend reputable companies as part of their schemes. There may be a charge.

Keep moving and stay steady

**Keep moving
and stay steady**



Move...

We recommend 150 minutes of activity or exercise each week. You could try walking, gardening or housework. You don't have to do it all in one go, try small amounts of time first. Don't sit still for long periods.

... pace yourself!

Leave the house in plenty of time and plan your route. If you are walking, use a familiar route so you know the road and path layout. If you are getting the bus, take your time getting on and off and use the handrails. The bus driver won't mind waiting. If you are driving, take care getting in and out of the car and make sure you have plenty of room to open the door.

When you are out, take your time and be aware of potential hazards, such as uneven surfaces. Steady yourself if you need to or consider using a walking aid. Don't worry about what other people think. Watch out for slippery floors – outside or inside shops – and steps.

Keep your personal belongings, such as money or keys, near so you don't have to look for them in your bag.

Shopping

If you are going shopping take a suitable bag or trolley with you. Carrying lots of bags can obstruct your view of the path below and ahead, making you more likely to trip or slip.

Walking aids

Don't be embarrassed to use a walking aid. Make sure you check if it is suitable for use outside and ask for an assessment if needed.

Exercise

Simple exercises can help with balance and build muscle strength.

Your therapist will be able to tell you what exercises are best and how often you should do them.

This may include physiotherapy or group exercises.

If you are currently not seeing a physiotherapist there are still various ways you can access strength and balance exercises; we have access to Postural Stability classes - a free 12 to 36 week programme for older people at a risk of falling. Or you can access exercises at activelifeld.co.uk/gym/.

Never carryout any exercises that you are unsure about or if you have been told not to exercise by your GP/health professional. Always seek advise if you are unsure.

My exercises...

If your therapist has recommended exercises, keep a note of them here.

[illegible]

What do I do if I fall?

If you fall, don't try to get up immediately. Take a minute or two to stay still, calm down and check for injuries.

If you are worried about falling at home, it might give you peace of mind to carry a mobile phone or wear a lifeline. If you haven't got this yet, please consider having one arranged.

If you think you have injured yourself, don't try to move and call 999

Use your personal alarm, bang on the wall, call for help or crawl to the phone if you can.

If you have to wait for help try to:

- crawl to a soft surface and use a jumper or cushion as a pillow
- keep warm and use clothing or a tablecloth as a blanket
- change position by rolling so you don't get stiff, go numb or get a pressure sore
- roll away from wet areas if you have gone to the toilet.

My actions

To reduce my risk of falling I need to...

- get my blood pressure checked
- book a medication review

- talk about dizziness
- book an eye and hearing test
- charge my mobile phone
- drink more
- have a de-clutter at home
- think about getting a personal alarm and grab rails fitted
- start moving more
- check my clothes and footwear are suitable
- talk about how I feel.

My three things I am going to do to prevent falls...

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Your step by step guide to get up safely...if you can

Don't attempt if you are unsure/injured. Call for help.

1. Roll on to your side and push up on to your elbows.
2. Push yourself onto all fours.
3. Crawl to a chair, table or bed and hold on to it to steady yourself.
4. Put the foot of your strongest leg flat on the floor.
5. Lean forward and use your strongest leg and arms to push yourself up to stand. Keep holding on to steady yourself.
6. Sit down for a while and rest.

Always tell your next of kin and a health professional what's happened.

Your step by step guide to get up safely...if you can.



Who can help me?

Our services:

- Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) - visit www.kentcht.nhs.uk/pals
- Continence Service - visit www.kentcht.nhs.uk/continence
- Falls support - visit www.kentcht.nhs.uk/service/falls-prevention-service/ for information about our Postural Stability Service, Falls Service or Community Rehabilitation Teams or speak to your healthcare professional about other services we provide that may be able to help you.

You may also find other services that could help at www.kentcht.nhs.uk

Our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) can tell you about the services in your area that you might need. Don't be worried to contact them.

Personal alarm

There are lots of companies that can install these alarms. There is usually a cost involved, so we recommend looking at a couple of options.

More information is available from Kent County Council or our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS).

Kent County Council, Social Services

Able to advise and maybe help with adaptations to your home, including personal alarms and key safes.

Phone: 03000 41 61 61

Text relay: 18001 03000 41 61 61

Email: social.services@kent.gov.uk

Web: www.kent.gov.uk/social-careand-health/care-and-support/careand-support-at-home/equipmentand-changes-to-your-home

Age UK

Phone: 0800 678 1602

Web: www.ageuk.org.uk

Fire Service

Free safety advice and checks, including smoke alarms.

Phone: 0800 923 7000

Web: www.kent.fire-uk.org

Email: home@kent.fire-uk.org

Royal Osteoporosis society

Phone: 0808 800 0035

Web: www.theros.org.uk

Hi Kent

Registered charity for deaf and hard of hearing people.

Maidstone: 01622 691151

Canterbury: 01227 760046

Text: 07939 593030

Kent Association for the Blind (KAB)

East Kent phone: 01227 763366

Email: rehab.canterbury@kab.org.uk

West Kent phone: 01622 691357

Email: enquiry@kab.org.uk

Medway phone: 01634 332929

Email: rehab.medway@kab.org.uk

My contacts

My nurse

My podiatrist (feet)

My physiotherapist (exercises)

My occupational therapist (home environment and exercises)

Contact us

Contact one of the teams from Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm:

0300 7900 389

For the rapid response in east Kent, please see the Acute Response Team page.

For the rapid response in west Kent, please see the Urgent Care Team (West Kent) page.

Go to service page

Do you have feedback about our health services?

0800 030 4550

8.30am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday

Text: 07899 903499

kentchft.PALS@nhs.net

kentcht.nhs.uk/PALS

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)
Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust
Trinity House, 110-120 Upper Pemberton
Ashford
Kent
TN25 4AZ



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Visit kentcht.NHS.uk/icare

If you need communication support or this information in another format, please ask a member of staff or [contact us](#) using the details above.

