

Take small steps to stay on your feet

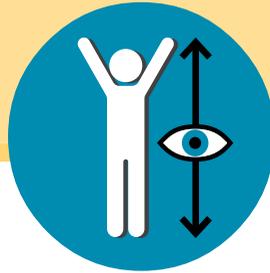


Five easy tips to prevent falls and fractures

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1 - Get checked out top to toe

If you can see what's around you and where you're going, it is easier to move around safely. Get your eyes tested every year – this is free on the NHS. You may already wear glasses, but this doesn't mean that they are still the best fit for you now. If your vision changes don't wait – go and see your optician as soon as possible.

If you notice a change in your hearing talk to your GP. Many high street pharmacies also offer free hearing tests.

Wear shoes and slippers that are comfortable and fit properly. Walking around indoors in socks or bare feet can increase your chance of falling, so wear shoes inside. Sore feet, long toe nails and poor circulation can make you less steady on your feet. Go to your GP or local podiatrist to get your feet checked out.

If you take prescription medications, your GP and local pharmacist should review this regularly. You may no longer need to take all of them, or the dose might need to be changed. Check if you can drink alcohol while taking your medication. If any of your prescriptions make you feel faint or drowsy, check them out with your GP. Remember that over the counter medications can have an effect on other medication you are taking. Tell the pharmacist what other medication you are taking.





2 - Calcium keeps bones strong

As you get older your bones become thinner. It is important to keep your bones strong, as there will be less chance of them breaking if you do fall. One of the ways you can do that is eat a well balanced diet full of calcium. Foods that contain calcium include:

- dairy products (low fat is just as good)
- green leafy vegetables like broccoli and cabbage
- soya beans and tofu
- nuts
- bread
- fish where you eat the bones like sardines.



3 - Get enough vitamin D

Vitamin D is important to keep bones strong. You should get most of the vitamin D you need from natural sunlight. Try to spend some time in the sun each day during the summer, but be careful not to get sun burn. If it is difficult for you to get out and about, you may want to talk to your GP or pharmacist about taking a supplement.



4 - Stay active

Even if you haven't exercised for many years, staying active has many benefits. It helps strengthen muscles, bone and improves balance which reduces the risk of falling. Types of exercise you can do include:

- walking
- gardening
- dancing
- yoga
- tai chi.

Your local leisure centre will have more information about groups and classes that are happening in your area.

Go to www.edinburghleisure.co.uk to find out more.



5 - Clear your way at home

It is important to check your home for anything you might trip over or bump in to such as rugs, loose carpets, low level furniture or items lying on the floor. Low lighting can also make it difficult to see where you're going. A friend, relative or neighbour may be able to help see things that may be a risk, so ask them to help.

If you are not able to carry out small jobs in your home, you can contact a local care and repair service. They will do things such as change light bulbs and tack down carpets.

Go to: www.careandrepairedinburgh.org.uk to find out more

If you do fall

We hope that you won't ever have a fall, but just in case, it is good to have a plan of action if you do.



Rest and wait plan

If you have a fall and you can't get up without help or you are hurt:

- call for help. Use your alarm if you have one, or shout and bang on the wall to get a neighbour's attention. If you can, use a mobile or crawl to a telephone and dial 999.
- move to a soft surface. If you land on a hard surface like a bathroom floor, try to move on to a carpet. This will help to keep you warm.
- **keep warm.** Try to reach for anything nearby which will keep you warm. This could be a duvet or clothing. If you are in a draught try to move out of the way of it.
- **keep moving.** Try to rock from side to side, but keep the injured part of you still. If you lie still for too long you will become stiff and cold.



Up and about plan

If you have a fall and feel you can get up, first of all check that no part of you is injured. Everyone is different so there is no set way to get up after a fall, but remember to be careful and take your time. You can use a piece of sturdy furniture to support you when you get up.



More information

For more information to help you take positive steps to avoid trips and falls visit www.nhsinform.co.uk/falls or phone NHS inform on 0800 22 44 88 (textphone 18001 0800 22 44 88).

www.edinburgh.gov.uk/fiveeasysteps