



My Staying Steady Guide

My falls prevention toolkit

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Introduction

The risk of falling often increases as you get older. A fall can have serious consequences including:

- broken bones
- loss of confidence
- reduced mobility
- an increasing dependence on the help of others

Most falls occur during everyday activities such as:

- getting in and out of the bath
- changing a light bulb
- trips and slips due to loose carpets or wet floors

When you fall, you often do not want to recognise the affect it has on us.

There are actions you can take to reduce your risk of falling. You can address the risk around your home by having:

- regular eye tests
- wearing fitted, safe footwear
- exercising regularly to keep strong
- keeping your homes adequately heated

This guide helps you assess your risk of falling and provides some simple advice and guidance on how to reduce your risk of falls.

Further action plans with advice and tips are also available.

These include:

- improving strength and balance
- eyesight checks
- reviewing medication
- identifying potential trip hazards around the home

What is your risk?

How at risk are you?

Muscle weakness

- As you get older, it is a natural part of ageing to lose muscle mass and reduce the amount of regular physical activity you do
- It's important to take regular exercise to strengthen weak muscles
- Good strength in your body really helps you to have good balance and reduce your risk of falling



What factors contribute to your risk of falling?

Answer YES or NO to each statement in the following sections.

	Yes	No
Do you sit most of the time?		
Do you feel weak moving around the house?		
Do you feel tired even after the smallest of tasks?		

Poor balance

There are many factors that can lead to poor balance.
These include:

- muscle weakness
- problems with your feet
- various medical conditions, such as vertigo, ongoing dizziness and low blood pressure



Poor balance greatly increases your risk of falling and it is important to recognise that if you have poor balance, you should take action to improve it or use equipment (such as walking sticks or handrails) accordingly.

Yes No

.....
Do you lose your balance easily?

.....
Do you find it difficult to stand still without swaying?

.....
Do you sometimes stray sideways when walking?

.....
Do you feel unsteady when you bend down to pick something up or reach into a high cupboard?

.....
Do you hold on to furniture to walk around the house?

Problems with your eyesight

Having problems with your eyesight can also increase your risk of falling. If you are having difficulty in seeing trip hazards and edges, the likelihood of having an accident will increase.



By regularly visiting the optician and keeping your eyesight prescription up to date, you can help minimise the risk.

The optician also looks at eye health and can often identify conditions early such as:

- cataracts
- glaucoma
- macular degeneration

So even if you don't think your vision has changed, it's still important to have an annual eye test (available on NHS).

Yes

No

.....
Do you struggle to see the edge of tables
and other objects?
.....

.....
Is your vision blurry?
.....

.....
Do you get visual disturbances such as
floaters in my eyes?
.....

.....
Do you wear varifocals/bifocals?
(these can make it difficult to focus on
obstacles)
.....

Hearing

A hearing impairment means you may not hear people coming up behind you or hear cars approaching which could increase your risk of falling. Sound reverberates off walls and helps with distance perception and to keep your balance.

You may need wax removal or a hearing aid check.



Yes

No

Do you find it difficult to hear?

Diet

Eating a healthy diet is essential to keeping healthy and building muscle strength. If you have a tendency to skip meals (particularly easy to do if you are living alone), this can increase your risk of feeling dizzy and experiencing a fall. You should remember the importance of different food groups: protein for muscle strength and tissue repair; carbohydrates for energy; fruit and vegetables contain vitamins and minerals plus fibre which helps keep bowels healthy.



Yes

No

Do you need to eat more fruit and vegetables as well as protein?

Environmental hazards



Hazards in your home and surroundings can increase your risk of falling. These include:

- loose carpets
- slippery floors
- slippery baths and showers
- a lack of handrails
- lots of steps and stairs
- regularly using a step ladder or stool to access your everyday essentials
- poor or inadequate lighting
- walking your dog
- cluttered floors
- the weather (rain and ice)
- uneven surfaces (pavements) and many more

Yes

No

Do you have lots of stairs/steps in your home?

Do you have slippery surfaces in your bath or shower?

Do you have some slippery floors in your house?

Do you regularly use a step stool or ladder?

Do you feel anxious when you walk your pet?

Do you have loose carpets in your home?

Do you have many trip hazards in your home
(such as mats, trailing flexes, low coffee tables,
dogs, stools and vacuum cleaners)

Do you go out in icy, windy and very rainy weather?

Yes

No

Do you wear the same type of footwear in all weather?

Is your home dimly lit?

Do you need handrails around the bath?

Is your house often cold?

Do you look down and never up when you walk?

Are your garden paths over grown with weeds and grass?

Medication

Certain medications can make you feel lightheaded or dizzy. Some may also reduce blood pressure or affect vision, all of which will increase your risk of falling.



Yes No

Do you take several different types of medication each day?
.....

Do you experience side effects?
.....

Do you regularly feel dizzy and lightheaded?
.....

Medical conditions

There are certain medical conditions which can increase your risk of falling as they can cause dizziness, fainting (or feeling faint), low blood pressure, reduced mobility or chronic pain. These conditions include diabetes, vertigo, stroke, heart conditions, arthritis, gout, COPD, incontinence, musculoskeletal problems (affecting feet, knees or hips) and many more.



Yes No

.....
Do you have one or more of the conditions listed above?
.....

Do you feel faint?
.....

Do you feel dizzy and lightheaded?
.....

Have you fainted before?
.....

Do you struggle to walk without a walking aid?
.....

Do you have stiff joints?
.....

Are you in pain when you walk?
.....

Are you breathless doing short activities?
.....

Do you struggle to get to the toilet in time?
.....

What is my risk of falling?

How many times did you answer YES in response to questions in the following sections:

Muscle weakness

Poor balance

Visual impairment

Hearing

Diet

Environmental hazards

Medication

Medical conditions

The more times you answered YES, the higher your risk of having a fall and the more important it is that you take action to reduce those risks.

Please see the following sections that outlines helpful advice and tips as well as details of services that can help prevent falls.

Advice and tips

Worried about your balance or fearful of falling?

- ✓ Get regular sight and hearing checks (1)
- ✓ Look after your feet, wear properly fitting shoes and slippers. See a chiropodist if necessary (2)
- ✓ Be safe moving around your home at night, keep a torch by your bed, use night lights or leave a light on in the hallway and near the toilet.
- ✓ Remove or tape down uneven tiles or carpeting, especially in walkways, on stairs and doorways. Keep passages clear.
- ✓ Buy a non-slip bath mat from the pharmacy.
- ✓ Drink plenty of water - and accept that you may not be able to drink as much alcohol as you used to. As bodies age, alcohol cannot be processed as well as it once was. It can also interact with different medicines.
- ✓ Move about - get up for a walk or stretch every 20 minutes or so if you've been sitting for a long time.
- ✓ Try a nearby Strength & Balance programme. Try a Tai Chi, gentle yoga or light stretching class. Often these are available at local community centres.

(1) There may be a charge if you are under 60.

(2) You may have to wait for an NHS chiropodist; private chiropody will have a charge.

Helpful contacts and information

Ealing Handyperson Service can help with small practical jobs to make your home safer and easier to manage.

Tel: 020 8825 6070 Email: HandyPersonReferrals@ealing.gov.uk

Age UK Ealing free telephone support & befriending service.

Tel: 020 8567 8017 www.ageuk.org.uk/ealing/

StayActive4Life deliver exercise classes to reduce the risk of falls. The classes are held across the borough in various locations including Acton, Ealing, Greenford, Perivale, Northolt, Southall, call for more details.

Tel: 01753 653836 / 07715170207 Email: admin@StayActive4Life.co.uk

Ealing Advice Service (EAS) free local advice, information and signposting for benefits, care and support.

Tel: 020 8579 8429 www.ealingadvice.org

Everyone Active local leisure centres have loads of activities on offer for all abilities – bowls to badminton, swimming and social clubs (charges will apply). **www.everyoneactive.com**

Healthy Homes Ealing free and impartial advice on energy bills, insulating your home and how to upgrade old and inefficient heating systems. Financial assistance and grants.

Tel: 0800 0832265 www.ealing.gov.uk/HealthyHomesEaling

