



Patient Information Leaflet

Staying on Your Feet A Guide to Preventing Falls

Produced by:
Falls Prevention and Osteoporosis Steering Group

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If you require this leaflet in another language, large print or another format, please contact the PALS Team, telephone **01983 534850**, who will advise you.

If you are unable to read this leaflet because English is not your first language, please ask someone who speaks English to telephone PALS on 01983 534850 for further information and help.

Polish:

Jeśli nie jesteś w stanie przeczytać tej ulotki bo angielski nie jest pierwszym językiem, poproś kogoś, kto mówi po angielsku, o kontakt telefoniczny z (PALS 01983 534850) aby uzyskać więcej informacji i pomoc

Russian:

Если вы не можете прочитать этот буклет на английском языке потому что не является первым языке, пожалуйста, попросите кого-нибудь, кто говорит на английском языке для телефонного (PALS 01983 534850) для получения дополнительной информации и помощи

Turkish:

Eğer İngilizce ana diliniz değilse, çünkü bu broşürü okumak için yapamıyorsanız, daha fazla bilgi için 01983 534850 üzerinde PALS telefon İngilizce bilen birine sormak ve yardım lütfen

Bulgarian:

Ако не сте в състояние да прочетете тази листовка, тъй като английският не е първи език, опитайте някой, който говори английски, за да телефонирам (PALS на 01983 534850) за повече информация и помощ

Czech:

Pokud nejste schopni přečíst tuto příbalovou informaci, protože angličtina není vaším rodným jazykem, zeptejte se někoho, kdo mluví anglicky na telefonní PALS na 01983 534850 pro další informace a pomoc

Bengali:

আপনি ইংরেজি আপনার প্রথম ভাষা না থাকার কারণে এই লফিলটে পড়তে অক্ষম হন, তাহলে আরও তথ্যের জন্য 01983 534850 নভেগিশেন PALS টেলিফি এন ইংরেজি কথা কটে জিজ্ঞাসা করুন এবং সাহায্য করুন

Introduction

Sustaining a fall can happen to any person at any age. However, as we grow older, the impact of falling over can be more serious and the effects longer lasting. For example, falling in older age can lead to:

- A loss of confidence in doing your day to day jobs such as cooking, going shopping etc.
- Difficulty in walking.
- Possible fractures.
- A feeling of losing independence.

Why do falls happen?

Falling is not a natural part of growing older and any fall must be taken very seriously. The reasons why we fall in later life are extremely varied and will usually be different for each person. Some of the most common reasons are listed below:

- Poor vision and hearing.
- Painful feet.
- Conditions that can restrict movement such as arthritis or Parkinson's disease.
- Taking four or more medicines.
- Poor diet or loss of appetite.
- Dizziness.
- Having a fear of falling and anxiety.

A vast number of falls also occur within the home, e.g. due to tripping over clutter and trailing wires or due to poor lighting.

How can I help myself?

There are many practical steps you can take to prevent falls happening and to help you feel safer and steadier on your feet.

Here are some suggestions:

1) Visit your GP

If you have had a fall or are worried that you might fall, please talk to your GP or health care professional to rule out any underlying health problems that may be contributing to your unsteadiness. Your GP may also want to review your medicines to ensure that they are not causing your blood pressure to drop or make you feel dizzy.

2) Check your hearing and eyesight regularly

Poor vision and hearing can increase the risk of falls.

- Ensure you have regular sight and hearing tests.
- Wear your hearing aids and glasses as advised by your audiologist or optician.
- Keep your home well lit, especially at night time.

3) Look after your feet and check your footwear

Problems with your feet, especially those that cause pain, can affect your balance and reduce your confidence when walking.

- Try to keep your feet in good condition.
- Seek help from a Podiatrist/Chiropodist if required.
- Slip-ons and high heeled shoes can make you unsteady. Well-fitting shoes with a solid back will help you feel better balanced. This also applies to slippers.

- Keep moving your toes and ankles when sitting down. This will help with circulation and to keep your feet flexible which will help your balance.

4) Keep active

The more active you are the better. Being on the move helps to keep your joints flexible and your muscles strong. This will help to improve your balance.

- Try to stay as active as possible to keep strong and mobile.
- Try to avoid sitting longer than 20 minutes before you stand up and change position.
- Make sure your walking aid is in good working order and regularly get your ferrules, (rubber grip on the bottom) checked.
- Stand up slowly from sitting, as standing too quickly may cause dizziness.
- Take a moment to stand still before walking off.
- Avoid rushing.
- Take care when turning, as turning too fast may cause dizziness.
- Take care when reaching.

Ask your GP about Physiotherapy to help improve your strength and balance.

5) Check for home hazards

There are many things you can do to increase your confidence within your own home. Below are listed common suggestions:

Stairs:

- Consider having handrails fitted to each side, to increase your feeling of safety.
- Never leave objects on the stairs that could cause you to trip.
- Keep stairwell and landings well lit.

Trip hazards, e.g. carpets, rugs, wires:

- Carpets, rugs and wires can cause people to trip accidentally if they are not firmly secured.
- Consider removing loose rugs completely or fixing them safely to the floor with tape.
- Keep cables and wires firmly secured and out of the way.
- Try to keep your home free from clutter.

Bathroom:

- Try to allow as much time as possible to reach the toilet.
- Consider having handrails fitted to help steady yourself when getting on and off the toilet.
- A non-slip mat can help in the bath or shower.

Bedroom:

- Try sitting when getting dressed instead of standing.
- Keep a night light on for night time toileting.
- Consider keeping a phone by your bed.

Hallway:

- A letterbox cage will reduce bending.
- Do not rush to answer the doorbell/phone.

6) Your medicines

- It is important to take all medications as prescribed.
- Some medications such as antidepressants and sleeping tablets can make you feel faint or affect your balance.
- Speak to your GP or Pharmacist if you have dizzy spells, loss of balance or have difficulty remembering to take your medications.
- Regular medication reviews can be arranged with your Community Pharmacist. These can be helpful to highlight any potential issues.

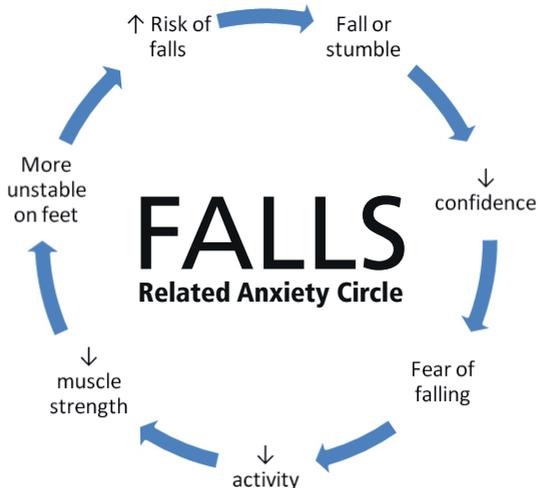
7) Maximise your health with good nutrition

- Eating a balanced diet is important for good health.
- Calcium and Vitamin D are important for keeping bones strong.
- Calcium can be found in dairy products such as milk, cheese and yoghurt.
- Vitamin D can be found in oily fish and eggs, but the best source is exposure to sunlight for just a few minutes. Take care not to let your skin redden or burn.

8) The link between falls and anxiety

The fear of falling is very common if you have experienced a fall or are concerned that you might fall. This can make people anxious and worry. If the feeling of worry persists over a period of time it can stop people going about their normal activities and enjoying life to the full.

This can cause a lack of confidence which in turn leads to inactivity and weak muscles and therefore increases the risk of falling.



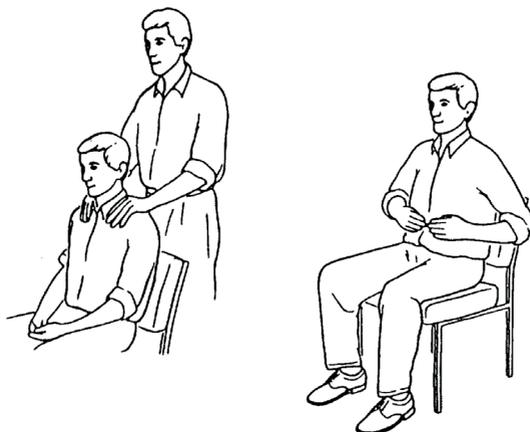
The good news is that the cycle can be broken by:

- Staying active.
- Stop avoiding activities or can you do things in a different way?
- Think as positive as possible.
- Try simple breathing techniques for relaxation, (as explained below).

Simple Breathing Technique for Relaxation, (to help with anxiety)

- Rest your hand lightly on your tummy and give a little cough. The muscle that you feel under your hand is your diaphragm.
- Try to relax the muscles around your shoulders and upper chest.

- Breathe quietly and gently.
- Allow your tummy to rise as you breathe in and fall as you breathe out.
- You should feel more movement around the waist and less around the upper chest.
- Practice daily so that it becomes easier to do.



Planning ahead

If you are concerned about falling, it can be extremely helpful to plan ahead so that you know what to do and how to get help should you need it.

If you already know that you are unable to get up off the floor, a personal alarm could help. Through activating your personal alarm at a time of need, you will have a way of calling for help reliably and quickly.

There are a number of different schemes on the Isle of Wight such as Wight Care and Age UK, (details of these services can be found on page 12).

As an alternative to a personal alarm, consider carrying a phone with you.

What to do if you have a fall

- Try not to panic. Lie still for a few minutes and work out your plan.
- If you know you can't get up or are injured, call for help. Use your personal alarm or your telephone or make as much noise as possible to attract attention.
- Try to keep warm and wait for help.

If you think you can get up:

- Slowly move yourself towards a sturdy piece of furniture by wriggling across the floor carefully on your bottom or by crawling on all fours.
- Facing the furniture, rest your arms on it for support, and push up through your legs to ease yourself up.
- Hold the furniture for support as you turn and sit down.
- Rest a while before moving off.

If you are unsuccessful in getting up after a couple of attempts, conserve your energy, call for help and keep warm until help arrives.

Always tell your GP that you have had a fall.

Useful telephone numbers

Age UK Isle of Wight

01983 525282

Age UK offer a range of services and advice such as; Personal Alarms, Welfare Benefits Service, Good Neighbour Scheme, Handy-person Service, services to help older people overcome loneliness and isolation, Gardening Service, Toenail Cutting Service and much more.

Independent Living Centre, (ILC)

01983 241494

The centre is run by People Matter IW the Island's user-led organisation. The ILC provides information and assistance to residents who wish to continue living in their own home. We offer a free and impartial opportunity to trial equipment and adaptations as well as advice to enhance independence in activities of daily living. This includes Occupational Therapy assessments, advice on conditions, support groups, referral to other services and access to bathing adaptations.

Wightcare Community Alarm

01983 821105

This Community Alarm service provides peace of mind for people who feel at risk in their own homes. It is a service that operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The service gives you the freedom to live your life independently knowing that you can obtain assistance when you need it. The community alarm service works via a special alarm unit connected to the telephone line. The alarm unit has a built in button, which you press to obtain assistance, alternatively the alarm can be activated by a pendant which is worn around the neck or on a wrist band.

Social Services**01983 823340**

If you are already receiving services from Adult Social Care they can be contacted on the number above and you will be put through to the appropriate team.

Adult First Response**01983 814980**

This is the first point of contact for new referrals to Adult Social Care. When you contact us, our first response team may arrange an assessment or signpost you to other services which could assist you as required.

Community Equipment Service (CES)**01983 528334**

The CES can offer short term equipment loan (STEL) on certain pieces of equipment as previously offered by the Red Cross. These loans are for a maximum of three months. If the equipment is still required after that period you will have the opportunity to purchase. Please note some items will require a referral from a health professional.

CES – 19 Barry Way, PO30 5GY.

Open to the public 09:30 – 11:30 and 13:30 – 15:30

British Red Cross**01983 532324 / 537815**

The British Red Cross can provide short-term loans of wheelchairs, commodes, and other toileting equipment. A referral from a healthcare professional is required for wheelchairs. Volunteers can also provide extra support and care at home after a hospital stay.

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If you have any queries or concerns about the content of this leaflet please call (01983) 822099 and ask to speak to the relevant department.

Valuables should not be brought into the hospital. If patients have to bring in valuable items they should ask a nurse to store them safely and request a receipt for the items. You may not be able to have the valuable items returned if the time of discharge from hospital is out of hours.

We are sorry but the Trust cannot accept responsibility for loss or damage to items not given for safe keeping.

You can get further information on all sorts of health issues online at: **www.nhs.uk**

For Health advice and out of hours GP service please call the NHS 111 service on: **111**

We Value Your Views On Our Service

If you wish to comment on the care which you, your relative or friend has received, we will be pleased to hear from you. Please speak to the person in charge of the ward, clinic or service in the first instance or ask them to contact the PALS Team. If you wish to contact them directly, telephone on **01983 534850**.

Alternatively you may prefer to write to:

Chief Executive
Isle Of Wight NHS Trust
St Mary's Hospital
Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5TG

You can also share any concerns you have about our services with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) on **03000 61 61 61** or at **enquiries@cqc.org.uk**

All NHS sites are no smoking areas.

If you would like help and advice to stop smoking please call: Freephone 0800 169 0 169 to talk to the NHS Smoking Helpline.