

Preventing falls

Falls can have a serious effect on anyone, here are some basic steps you can take and some exercises to help you prevent them.



Anyone can have a fall, but older people are more vulnerable and likely to fall, especially if they have a long-term condition. Don't worry, there is lot of help available.

Do you:

Yes

- feel nervous about the possibility of falling?
- hold on to furniture as you move around?
- have dizziness or feel light-headed as you get up out of a chair or bed?
- feel more drowsy than usual?
- have difficulty walking or feel unsteady on your feet?
- find it harder to see or things look blurry?
- find it harder to hear what people are saying to you?
- take regular medication for a long-term condition including heart disease, dementia, diabetes, blood pressure or asthma? ...
- exercise less than twice a week?
- rush to, or need to go, to the toilet more often?
- feel confused even for a short while?

If you tick yes to one or more of these questions, then you might be at risk of falling and the information in this leaflet could help.

If you think you are at risk of having a fall, talk to your GP or pharmacist – many falls can be avoided with help

Top six ways to prevent falls



1. Look after your feet

- Make sure your shoes/slippers keep your foot firmly in place. Avoid narrow heels, open backs or worn soles.
- See a podiatrist if your feet are painful.



2. Stay well

- Eat a balanced diet, including foods rich in calcium (dairy products, foods fortified with added calcium, canned sardines and salmon, green leafy vegetables) and vitamin D (fatty fish like tuna, mackerel and salmon, foods with added vitamin D, cheese, egg yolks, beef liver) for healthy and strong bones.
- Avoid going for long periods between meals.
- Drink plenty of fluid: about six to eight glasses each day. This does not have to be water; tea, coffee, fruit juice, squash or even yoghurt or custard will help.
- Always take your medicines on time and as prescribed. Check if they have side effects like dizziness/light headedness or drowsiness. If you aren't sure, ask your pharmacist when you pick up your prescription.
- Be aware of changing weather conditions, especially if rain or freezing temperatures are forecast.



3. Look after your eyes

- Have your eyes tested regularly (every two years if under 70, annually thereafter) – it's free if you're over 65.
- Look after your glasses and clean them often.



4. Stay active, stay steady

- Be active – try to do 30 minutes of moderate activity every day. Moderate activity means you will be slightly out of breath.
- Try to avoid sitting for longer than 30 minutes at a time, keep doing little things every day, like the exercises in this leaflet.
- On two days per week try to do exercises to increase your strength (eg carrying shopping) and balance (eg dancing, Tai Chi).
- Continue with any exercises you have been advised to do.



5. Look after your home

- Replace worn floor coverings.
- Replace or remove rugs that have curled edges.
- Remove clutter and trailing cables and ensure your home is well lit.
- Replace low beds and chairs if you struggle to get up from them.
- Use non-slip mats in the bath/shower and anti-slip rug underlay. Have grab rails fitted next to the toilet and in the bath/shower.
- Keep items you often use in easy reach, so you don't have to climb to get them. NEVER stand on a chair to reach up to higher shelves. Have someone to help you if you're using a stepladder.
- Keep your home warm.
- If you have pets, be aware of them when moving about
- Keep garden paths clear and free from moss. Watch out for uneven paths and slippery surfaces. Hand rails or posts can be helpful.

6. Try not to rush

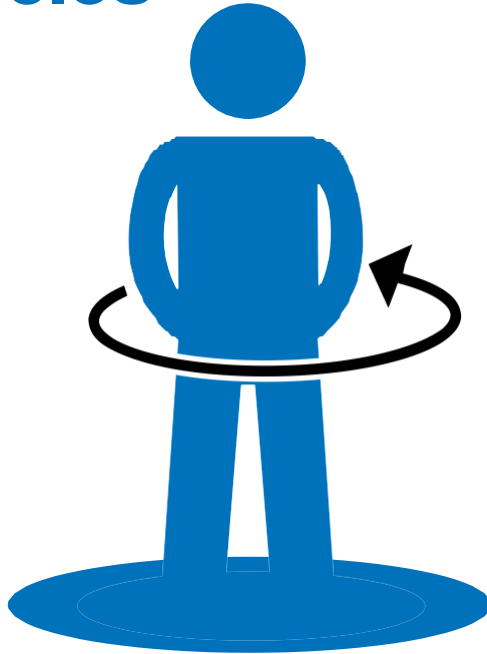
- If you find you are having to rush to the toilet, don't be embarrassed, this is not uncommon and can be improved. Talk to your doctor or nurse.
- Speak to your doctor about medications that have changed your bladder or bowel habits.
- Always leave a light on in the hallway or a night light when getting up to the toilet during the night.



Exercises you may find helpful

You may find it safer and more fun to have someone with you when you do these

Hip circles

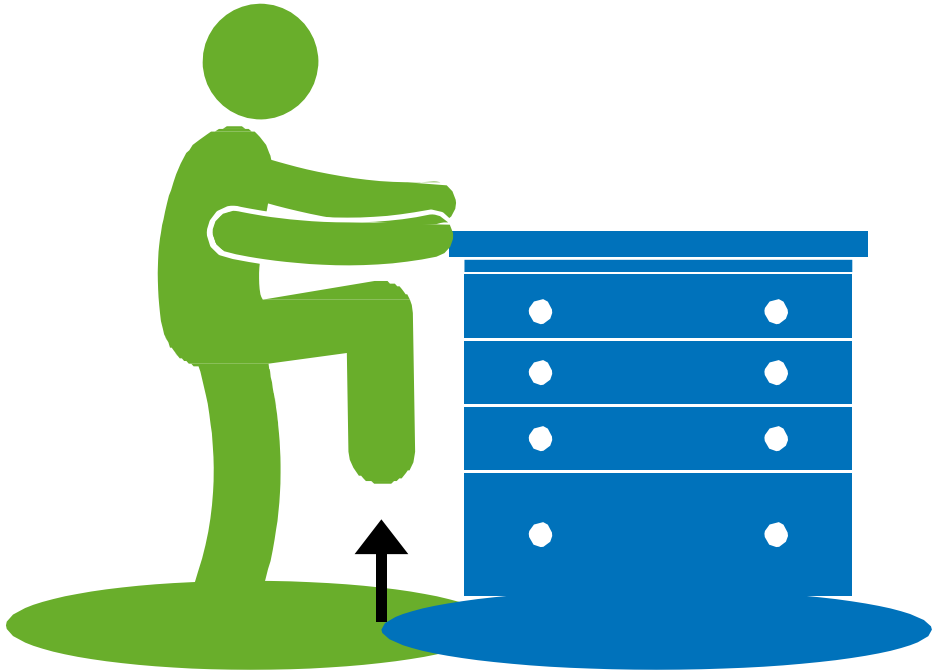


Standing with feet hip width apart, hands resting on a surface if required.

Slowly circle your hips 5 times in one direction, then 5 times in the opposite direction.

Whilst doing this, concentrate on your feet - you should feel your body weight shifting over different portions of your feet as you circle.

High knees



Standing with feet hip width apart, hands resting on a surface if required. A kitchen worktop or chest of drawers is best, but if you use a chair, make sure it is steady.

Start movement at your ankle and pull your toes upwards then lift your whole leg up in front of you.

Bending at your hip and knee. Hold the leg up for 3 seconds, then slowly lower.

Make sure your heel hits the ground first and you maintain the hip width stance throughout.

Repeat 10 times each leg

Hip extension



Standing with feet hip width apart, hands resting on surface if required. A kitchen worktop or chest of drawers is best, but if you use a chair, make sure it is steady.

Keeping your knees straight, move your straight leg backwards extending your hip (without pointing your toes).

Make sure you keep your back straight - do not lean forwards.

Repeat 10 times each leg.

Heel raises



Standing with feet hip width apart, hands resting on a surface if required. A kitchen worktop or chest of drawers is best, but if you use a chair, make sure it is steady.

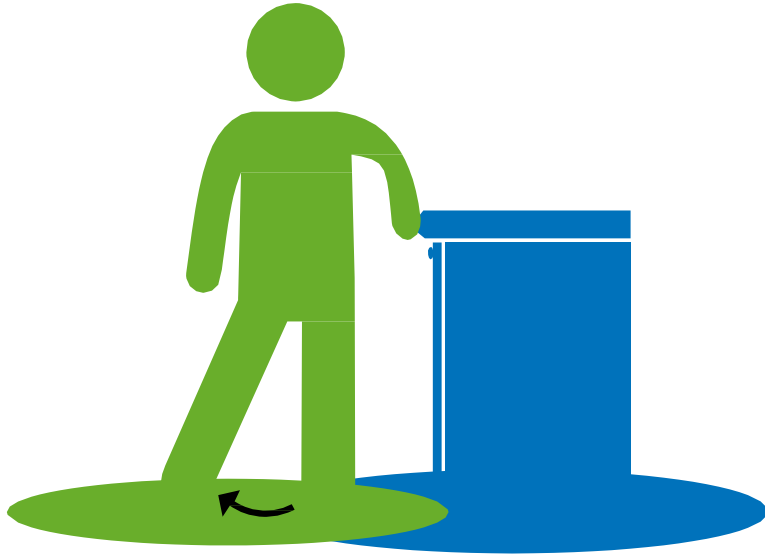
Slowly raise up onto your tip toes, pushing through feet not hands.

Hold for 3 seconds and gradually lower your heels back down.

Do not let your body rock backwards when you lower back to the floor.

Repeat 10 times each leg.

Hip abduction



Standing with feet hip width apart, hands resting on a surface if required. A kitchen worktop or chest of drawers is best, but if you use a chair, make sure it is steady. **Important: your toes must face forwards at all times during this exercise.**

If you imagine you are standing in the middle of a clock your toes need to be pointing towards 12 o'clock. Do not let them turn to face 2 o'clock or 10 o'clock.

If they do not face forwards you are not working the correct muscles. Keeping your knee straight and toes forwards, slowly lift one leg out to the side and hold for 2 - 3 seconds then return to the original position.

Make sure your body remains upright. Do not lean over to lift your leg higher.

Repeat 10 times each leg

Sit-to-stand



Sitting in a stable chair of adequate height (your hips and knees should be in line).

Come forwards in the seat, feet flat on the floor and lean forwards with your body.

Push down through your legs and stand up straight without using your arms to assist. Stand for a few seconds before slowly sitting back down.

To sit; stick your bottom out and sit down slowly again without using your arms for support. Do not drop down in to the chair.

Repeat 10 times each leg

What to do if you have a fall

FALL

Stay calm - take some deep breaths

Check for injuries – move your arms and legs

Can you try and get up?

Yes

Plan how you will get up

Take your time

Roll onto your side

Move on to your hands and knees

Use a firm chair or surface to help you stand up

Once standing, turn and sit down

No

Summon help

Personal alarm, phone, shout or bang something

Stay warm

If you can reach safely, pull a blanket, towel or the bed clothes over you to keep warm. Support your head with a cushion or rolled up item of clothing

Keep moving

Move limbs if possible to avoid stiffness and help with circulation

Stay dry

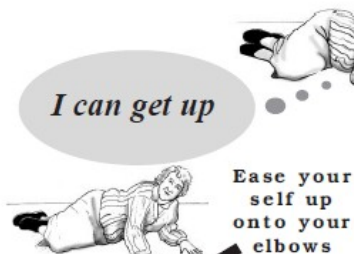
If you are able to, move away from any wet areas

INFORM YOUR GP

It is important to tackle the cause of your fall

I have had a fall

I can get up



Ease your self up onto your elbows

Move onto your hands and knees



Hold onto a firm surface to support you

Facing the chair ease yourself to a standing position



Turn yourself gently and sit on a firm surface

I can't get up



Can I attract attention?
•Shout and bang something
•Press your pendant alarm
•Use the telephone if you can



Can I get comfortable?
Find a near by •Pillow
•Cushion •Rolled up item of clothing to put under your head



Can I keep warm?
Cover yourself with clothing,
•Tablecloth
•Rug



Can I keep moving?
•Move position to avoid getting pressure sores
•Move joints to avoid stiffness and help circulation
•Roll away from a damp area if your bladder "Lets go"

Tell your G.P. or Health Professional about your fall

Do you feel safe and secure?

- Would a lifeline or community alarm system help? Not all falls can be prevented, but if you do fall, wearing a pendant alarm will enable you to get help quickly



- Where do you feel off balance? – would a rail there help?
- Are your alarms/pull cords easy to reach when necessary?

For information about all of these, please contact Leicester City Council, Adult Social Care & Safeguarding Tel: 0116 454 1004 (Monday-Friday 8am-6pm)

<https://mysupportneeds.leicester.gov.uk/web/portal/pages/supportathome>

For further information visit **NHS choices**:
www.nhs.uk/conditions/Falls/Pages/Introduction.aspx

Do you need more advice?

If you are worried about falling or are concerned about a relative falling, talk to your GP or pharmacist or call the number listed below that covers the area where you or your relative live.

Leicester (city residents only)

0116 454 1004

Mon - Fri 8am - 6pm

Leicestershire

0116 305 0004

Monday - Thursday, 8.30am – 5pm

Friday, 8.30am - 4.30pm

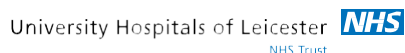
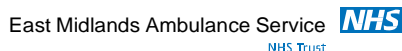
Rutland

01572 722 577

Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, 8.30am – 5.00pm

Tuesday, 9.00am – 5.00pm

Friday 8:30am – 4.30pm



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