

Preventing falls at home

Do

- ✓ use non-slip mats in the bathroom
- ✓ mop up spills, so that your floors are not slippery
- ✓ remove clutter from the floor, hallways, doorways or garden
- ✓ make sure that floors are free from trip and slip hazards, such as loose mats, rugs or carpet edges
- ✓ make sure you turn the lights on and rooms are well lit
- ✓ keep a night light near the bed for getting up in the dark
- ✓ get help with tasks that you cannot do safely on your own
- ✓ hold onto handrails in the toilet or bathroom, or on the stairs
- ✓ wear shoes that fit well and support your ankles
- ✓ use any assistive devices (items or equipment to help with everyday activities) that we give you
- ✓ eat well, exercise and keep active
- ✓ get regular health checks, eyesight tests and hearing tests
- ✓ trim your toenails regularly and see a GP or podiatrist (foot health professional) about any foot problems
- ✓ ask a GP how you can avoid falling, especially if you take lots of medicines
- ✓ wear a personal alarm or pendant, or have a fall detector fitted
- ✓ carry a mobile phone with you

Don't

- ✗ do not rush to get to the toilet or answer the phone or door
- ✗ do not walk on slippery floors in socks or tights
- ✗ do not wear loose-fitting or trailing clothes that might trip you up
- ✗ do not wear slip-on or backless shoes, or loose slippers
- ✗ do not put rugs and mats at the top or bottom of the stairs
- ✗ do not reach too high or low to get items
- ✗ do not smoke

Personal alarm or fall detector

You can wear a personal alarm or pendant around your neck or on your wrist. If you fall, you can press a button on the alarm and help will arrive quickly.

Another option is having a fall detector, bed sensor or epilepsy sensor fitted at home. This senses if you:

- have a fall
- get out of bed and do not return within a set time
- become ill suddenly (for example, you have a seizure or fit)

The sensor automatically calls for help. You do not need to press a button.

You can ask your local council if it can help you to install a personal alarm or fall detector. You might need to contribute towards the cost. If you would like to arrange a personal alarm or fall detector privately, you can contact one of these companies:

- Careline365, **phone** 0800 101 3333
- Living Made Easy, **phone** 0300 123 3084
- Age UK (Taking care), **phone** 0800 011 3846

Hazards in the home

It's important to find and remove any hazards to avoid falls. You might need to:

- remove loose rugs or carpets or make them secure with tape
- use non-slip mats in the bathroom
- remove clutter
- arrange items in a different way to avoid bumping into things
- clean up spilled food or drink straight away
- make sure electrical wires, bedspreads and long curtains do not trail over the floor
- keep things in easy to reach places to avoid climbing, stretching or bending
- use brightly coloured tape to mark possible hazards, such as the edges of doors, steps or furniture

Changes to your home (home adaptations) and equipment

Home adaptations are changes you can make to your home. They make it safer and easier to move around and do everyday tasks.

Some equipment can make daily living easier. This could include:

- lights that switch on automatically when you walk past or enter a room
- handrails and ramps
- a keysafe (a box outside your home to store spare keys) or another door entry system for people you trust to let themselves in securely
- a shower seat or bath aid
- a toilet frame
- a stairlift
- mobility aids to make it easier to reach things

You can ask your GP or district nurse for a commode (a toilet that can be easily carried or moved).

You call the Disabled Living Foundation for advice about daily living equipment.
Phone 0300 123 3084 or **email** info@dlf.org.uk

The NHS website has more information about:

- personal alarms, security systems (telecare) and keysafes
- household gadgets and equipment to make life easier
- home adaptations
- care and support that you can get for free

Getting support

Have a needs assessment

Your local council can do an assessment to find what help and support you need. This could include equipment and help in your home.

You need to have this assessment before the council can recommend a service. Examples are:

- equipment like a walking frame or personal alarm
- changes to your home, such as a walk-in shower
- practical help from a paid carer
- access to day centres and lunch clubs

You can apply online at GOV.UK or look on the NHS website for more information.

Have a home assessment

Your local council offers a service that assesses your home and recommends changes to help. Having a home assessment is free.

After the assessment, the council gives you advice about equipment or home adaptations that might help you. For support with the cost, you could:

- get equipment on loan from the council
- get a grant from the council called a Disabled Facilities Grant

The council decides if you need any large changes to your home, such as a wet room (a waterproof bathroom with a walk-in shower). It asks you to try other options first, such as a bath board or lift. Your council considers individual needs when recommending large home adaptations.

Ask to be referred to community rehabilitation

If you struggle with everyday tasks inside or outside your home, community rehabilitation and falls prevention services can help. Ask your GP or social services team to refer you to these services.

You can have occupational therapy or a physiotherapy assessment at your home or in a clinic. An occupational therapist can teach you different ways of managing everyday tasks and give you small equipment that might help. A physiotherapist can teach you exercises to improve your strength and balance.

You can talk to your occupational therapist and physiotherapist about ways to avoid falling.

Arrange a private occupational therapy assessment

You might prefer to pay for an independent occupational therapist to visit your home and do an assessment.

An occupational therapist can review how you manage in your home, and your current needs and priorities. You can then work together to find solutions to problems. The occupational therapist can recommend:

- ways for you to manage daily tasks
- equipment or changes to your home that could make daily living easier and prevent falls

You can find an independent occupational therapist on the Royal College of Occupational Therapists website. **Web** www.rcot.co.uk

More information about falls on our website

Our online guide has more information about preventing falls. It explains how to improve your balance and muscle strength. There are also tips on what to do if you are anxious or afraid of falling.

Move your smartphone camera over this QR code or visit **web** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/health-information/falls



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