

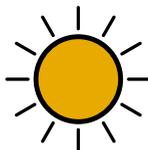
# Is it fallproof?

Simple steps to stay on your feet





# Look after yourself



## Why your general health matters

### ● Balance and muscle strength

As we age, our reactions get slower, while our balance and reflexes decline. We also lose about **30% of our muscle strength**. These factors make it harder to regain balance and falls become more likely.

### ➤ What can I do?

**Regular physical activity** strengthens muscles and improves balance, whatever your age.

**30 active minutes, 5 times a week** should do the trick. That's anything from walking to cycling or chair-based exercises. Any activity, really, that challenges your balance, like gardening or housework – it all counts.

### ● Bones

As a natural part of ageing, bones get more fragile – making a fracture more likely if you fall.

### ➤ What can I do?

A healthy, balanced diet will give you the calcium you need, as well as **Vitamin D**, which helps the body absorb calcium. Sunshine also gives you Vitamin D, but if you think you don't get enough, **take a supplement** as well.



### ● Eyesight

Ageing can affect our eyes and many conditions can occur, making it harder to see kerbs, stairs and different surfaces. You might need to **update your prescription**. If you can't get out to visit your optician, make an appointment for them to come to you at home.

### ➤ What can I do?

**Have a sight examination every year** – even if you think you're alright.

**Sight examinations are free for over 60s!**



### Get moving

To improve muscle strength and balance download our Get up and Go leaflet online and get moving!

[www.csp.org.uk/publications/get-go-guide-staying-steady](http://www.csp.org.uk/publications/get-go-guide-staying-steady)

You can join a local fitness programme near you. Find details at:

[www.leeds.gov.uk/activeageing](http://www.leeds.gov.uk/activeageing)

### ● Hearing

Ear infections and other conditions that can affect the inner ear can cause problems with a person's balance. They can also give a feeling of dizziness or vertigo (a spinning sensation) or can, make people feel as if they are falling.

### ➤ What can I do?

If you're between 40 and 74 years old, you'll be invited for a **NHS Health Check** every five years. They will assess your ear health. Get booked in for your appointment at your doctors, or they can come to your home. They will also review your medication to ensure the medicines you take are right for you and don't increase your risk of falling.

### Alcohol and ageing...

Did you know that the risk of unsteadiness from drinking alcohol increases with age? As you get older, the effects of alcohol increase. This can make you more unsteady on your feet than you used to be. If you're on medication and choose to consume alcohol, be aware of the effects alcohol may have.



## Falling - the facts

**Did you know that 1 in 3 over 65-year-olds fall per year, despite being in good health?**

**And for over 80-year-olds, that figure rises to 1 in 2.**

But falling isn't a normal part of ageing – there are simple steps you can take to keep on your feet. And in case you do fall, there are things you can do to prepare your home and yourself for the best recovery. This booklet covers the top tips, and points you in the direction of information that can help you further.

## Contents

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4-5	Falls prevention at home
6	What to do if you fall
6	If you fall and are unable to get up

Six out of ten falls happen in the home or garden, but there are things you can do to make your surroundings as safe as possible

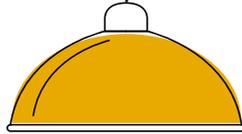
## Fallproof your home

Keep each area of your home well lit, and use nightlights – especially if you need to get up at night. Sensor lights can be a big help too, as they react to movement.

- Clear clutter in your home – especially on the stairs.
- Check that your floors have rugs with a non-slip underlay. If possible, do not have rugs and mats as these can be a trip hazard. Replace **worn rugs** and carpets and ensure the **gripper rod** between carpets is firmly in place.
- A surprising number of people trip over their pets – buy them a **bright collar** and a **bell** so they stay on your radar.
- Always **use a non-slip mat** in the bath or shower – and consider installing grab rails, it might give you peace of mind in the bathroom.
- Beware of **trailing clothes** like dressing gown cords, **organise jumbled wires** and **replace worn-out slippers**. You need slippers with grip, not slip.

You can assess your surroundings yourself, using our tips, but if you want someone to do a falls risk assessment in your home, contact Leeds Adult Social Care on **0113 222 4401**. They can also help if your home needs adapting with things such as grab rails and sensor lights.

Drink plenty of fluid approximately eight cups a day to prevent dehydration.



Staying active improves your mental and physical wellbeing, so don't feel the need to stay at home. Just keep these tips in mind

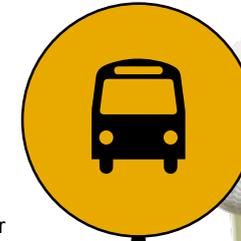
## Fallproof your journey

- Take your time – scan your path for **trip hazards**: cracked pavements, obstacles and uneven surfaces.
- If you need to carry a bag, think about your balance. Choose the **best way to carry your shopping bag** for you. Try and make sure you can always see the path beneath your feet!
- If you need a **walking aid**, don't be afraid to use it – it's better to stay steady.
- When it comes to catching the bus, have your bus pass or money at the ready when it pulls up – and when you get on, **ask the bus driver to wait until you're seated** before setting off again. When you're approaching your stop, press the bell and wait until the bus is stationary before standing up from your seat.

### The glass slipper

One of the secrets to stability is wearing shoes that fit. Our feet change as we age, and we lose some feeling and flexibility so a good fit with support and good grip in the winter is a must.

The more active you are, the more you offset the effects of ageing. So get out and about.



# If you fall...

If you do fall, plan what you need to do next. Take stock. Rest for a few minutes, take a deep breath and give yourself a chance to recover from the shock.

## If you are able to get up...

- Roll onto your hands and knees and crawl to a stable piece of furniture – such as a bed or sofa.
- To avoid discomfort as you help yourself up, place something soft under your knees if you can.
- Hold onto the support with both hands, place one foot flat on the floor, bending your knee in front of your body.



- Push down onto your front foot as you slowly steady yourself with your hands on the support and rise into a standing position.
- Turn round and sit down to rest on your seat.

## If you feel unable to get up after a fall...

- If you have a pendant alarm, press it. **Pendant alarms** can be hung around your neck or on your wrist, and when pressed, connect you

to an emergency response centre. They will then inform either your chosen contacts or the emergency services. To find out more about getting a pendant alarm for yourself, contact **Assisted Living Leeds** on **0113 378 3300**.

- Use the phone – your mobile if it's near or your home phone if you can reach it. Call a family member or neighbour, or **999** if you can't get through to anyone.



- If not, attract attention by shouting and/or banging on the floor.
- Try to keep warm – especially if you're on a hard or cold surface. Reach anything that might help: more clothing, blankets, or towels.



- Change your position regularly if you can without pain – this aids **circulation**, improves comfort and reduces the risk of pressure problems. If you can, sit up and lean against something – this will help your breathing.



**Tell your GP if you fall then you can plan ahead together.**

At Leeds City Council we're committed to helping you stay on your feet..

**NHS 111 service** – offering medical help and advice in a non life-threatening situation  
**111**

**Adult Social Care** – providing information for people who need extra support to access services and live independently in Leeds  
**0113 222 4401**

**Age UK** – the UK's largest charity, working to help older people love life  
**0113 389 3000**

**Neighbourhood Network Schemes** – community-based, locally-led organisations offering a wide range of support, services and activities for older people. Contact Leeds Older People's Forum to find your scheme  
**0113 244 1697**

**Carers Leeds** – supporting all unpaid carers by providing information, advice, social and emotional support  
**0113 246 8338**

**National Osteoporosis Society** – a national charity dedicated to improving the diagnosis, prevention and treatment of osteoporosis and fragility fractures  
**0845 450 0230**

**Leeds Osteoporosis Group** – local support group for people with osteoporosis  
**0113 286 8193**

**Access Bus** – a dial-a-ride bus service providing door-to-door local transport for those who are unable to use regular bus services  
**0113 348 1900**

**William Merritt Disabled Living Centre** – providing advice, support and solutions from professional therapists for independent living  
**0113 350 8989**

**Care and Repair** – Leeds home improvement agency providing advice and services to help people live more independently  
**0113 240 6009**

**Assisted Living Leeds** – providing services and equipment to aid older people in living independently  
**0113 378 3300**

**Telecare** – emergency alarm call service in Leeds. They also provide pendant alarms and sensors  
**0113 378 3290**



# Step to it...

## Once, twice?

If you've fallen before, the chances are you may fall again. Get in touch with your GP or physiotherapist. They may be able to help.

