



# Top tips to prevent falls and trips

A third of people over the age of 65 and half of those over 85 have a fall every year.

Falls can cause serious injuries and long term complications. If you've tripped or fallen already then you're at risk of doing so again, next time possibly with more serious consequences, like a broken bone or admission to hospital.

A large number of falls are preventable and there are plenty of things you can do to reduce your risk of falling.

## Balance and muscle strength

- We lose muscle bulk as we grow older, but strong muscles and good balance are vital in preventing falls. If you do fall, you need strong muscles to help you get up again.
- Strengthening muscles and improving balance and coordination, is one of the simplest and most effective things you can do to help prevent falls.
- It's surprisingly easy to improve your strength and balance with regular exercises at home; go to [www.csp.org.uk](http://www.csp.org.uk) and search 'six simple exercise to stop falls'.
- Local exercise classes are available in Solihull; call Solihull Active Team on **0121 7048207**.



## Vision

- Have your eyes tested regularly - some opticians will come to your house if you can't get to them easily.
- Make sure rooms and hallways are well lit - poor lighting will increase your risk of tripping over something.



## Hearing

- Talk to your GP if you're finding hearing difficult as it could be affecting your balance.



## Clothing and footwear

- Make sure clothes like trousers and dressing gowns are well fitting and not trailing on the ground. Avoid sloppy and ill-fitting slippers – they may be comfy but they increase your risk of trips and falls, especially on the stairs.



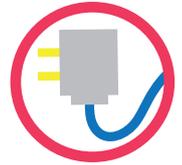
## Medicines

- Medicines such as anti-depressants or sleeping tablets can make you drowsy or un-coordinated and increase your risk of falls.
- Others, like blood pressure tablets, can cause your blood pressure to drop and make you feel dizzy when you stand up.
- Ask your GP to review your medication if you think it gives you these side effects.



## In your home

- If you live alone and are worried about falling, get a pendant alarm so you can call for help if you need to.
- Rugs are a trip hazard so should be avoided. If you do have rugs, make sure they're fixed down properly.
- Try to de-clutter - the more clutter you have, the more you're likely to trip over it.
- Don't leave things like newspapers, wires, shoes and bags where you can trip over them.
- Solihull Community Housing offer minor repairs and adaptations, and can arrange pendant alarm and grab rails (some services are chargeable) - **0121 717 1515**.
- Solihull Connect can arrange major adaptations, for example if you need help getting in the bath or getting upstairs. Ask for an assessment from an occupational therapist - **0121 704 8007**.
- West Midlands Fire Service carry out 'Safe and Well' visits and will check your home for fire safety and give advice - **0800 389 5525**.
- The Better Living Centre provide free demonstrations of useful gadgets, adaptations and equipment for the home - **0121 329 0909**.



## Dizziness

- Postural hypotension is a drop in blood pressure after getting up from a lying or sitting position.
- If this happens to you, ask your practice nurse or GP to check your 'lying and standing blood pressure'.
- Take extra care when getting up, especially first thing in the morning - stretching your arms and legs before sitting up or standing can help; stand up slowly and in stages.



## Staying hydrated

- Staying well-hydrated can reduce your risk of illness, falls and infection.
- Check the colour of your urine to see you're drinking enough - dark, strong smelling urine may be an indication you need to drink more. Urine should be a pale straw colour.
- Aim to drink 1.5 to 2 litres of fluid (about 6-8 glasses) a day unless you've been told by a doctor not to. Tap water is ideal but milk, juice and squash are alternatives.



## Bone Strength

- Osteoporosis is a condition in which bones lose their strength and are more likely to break.
- Half of women, and 1 in 5 men, over the age of 50 will break a bone as a result of osteoporosis.
- Your GP can advise on tests for osteoporosis if you are worried.
- To protect your bones you should:
  - Get plenty of weight bearing exercise
  - Go outside to get natural daylight every day
  - Eat a well-balanced diet with plenty of calcium (dairy products, fish and leafy green vegetables) and vitamin D (eggs, oily fish and breakfast cereals)
- Keep your alcohol intake low and stop smoking.
- More information is available at [www.nos.org.uk](http://www.nos.org.uk) or by calling **0808 800 0035**

