

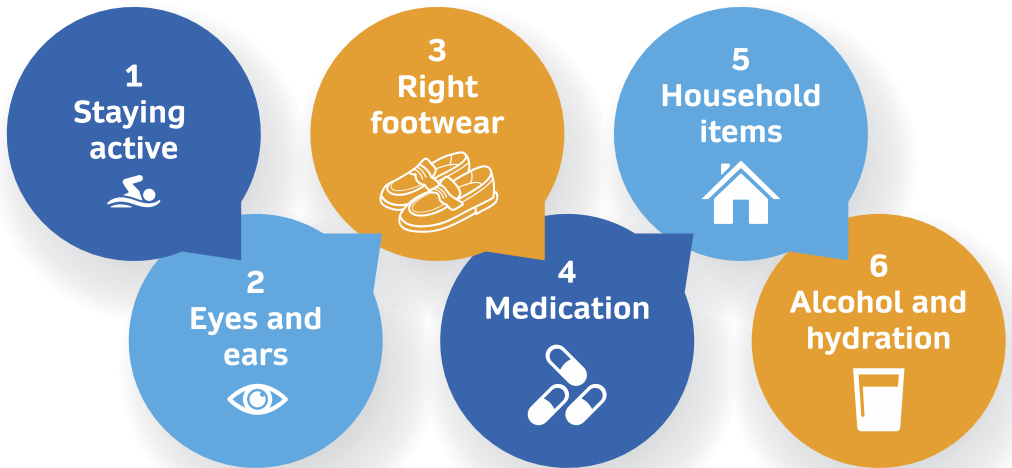
Six steps to reduce your risk of falling



Introduction

Falls are serious at any age, but breaking a bone after a fall becomes more likely as we get older. Even if a bone is not broken after a fall, it can make you more fearful of falling again, and this may limit how you live your life.

But it is possible to reduce your risk of falling. This booklet explains how to do this in six steps.



If after reading this booklet you still think you need more help to reduce the likelihood of you falling please contact our specialist falls service:

For Cheshire East visit oneyoucheshireeast.org

For Cheshire West and Chester call **0300 777 0033**
or visit cheshirechangehub.org

Are you at risk of falling?

If you answer yes to any of the questions below then this leaflet may be particularly useful to you. You may also wish to discuss your risk of falling with your doctor.

If you are aged 65 or more:

- Have you fallen in the last 12 months?
- Do you feel unsteady when standing or walking?
- Do you worry about falling?
- Are you on four or more medications a day?



Six simple exercises

Try these exercises a few times a week to build up your strength, balance and mobility.

All the exercises (except sit to stand) can be done seated if required. Stop exercising if you feel unwell.

If you have any concerns about exercising, please speak to your doctor or healthcare professional first.

1
Warm up with a seated march for 30 seconds

2
Toe and heel taps six to eight times

3
Side steps 10 to 15 times

4
Sit to stand five to 10 times

5
Slow and controlled leg swing three to six times on each leg

6
Heel raise five to 10 times



1 Staying active



If you're fit, you are less likely to fall. Staying active can help to keep muscles strong and improve your balance. Try to do some regular physical activity, such as swimming, gardening, walking or dancing. If you haven't exercised for a while, talk to your doctor or health professional first. They might be able to give you some strength and balance exercises to do at home or recommend a local exercise class.

Physical activity including strengthening exercises can improve your balance and coordination.

You should also do strengthening exercises at least twice a week to improve your muscles such as carrying shopping, dancing, yoga or lifting weights.

You can view a range of groups and activities to help you stay fit through your local council websites:

cheshireeast.gov.uk/livewell

westcheshirelocaloffer.co.uk



Questions to consider

Do I spend more time sitting down than doing some form of exercise each day?

Ideally you should aim to do 150 minutes of exercise each week. Try to do something every day, preferably in bouts of 10 minutes of activity or more. This could include walking or cycling.

Do I exercise my muscles each week?

Ideally, you should also do strengthening exercises on two or more days a week that work all the major muscles (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders and arms).

Do I do exercises to improve my balance and coordination?

Older adults at risk of falls, such as people with poor balance and some medical conditions, should do exercises to improve balance and coordination on at least two days a week. Examples include yoga, tai chi and dancing.

Do I already do some physical activity every day?

Physical activities should cause you to get warmer, breathe harder and your heart to beat faster. Daily chores like shopping, cooking or housework may not count because they don't do this, although they do help to break up sedentary (sitting) time.



2 Eyes and ears

Protecting your vision and ensuring proper eye health is one of the most important things you can do to help maintain your quality of life as you get older.

As you get older your vision may change, but it doesn't have to compromise your lifestyle or quality of eyesight. Knowing what to expect and when to seek professional care are important steps to safeguarding your vision.

And it's not only your eyes, good hearing is also important to reduce the chances of having a fall.





Questions to consider

Have I had my vision and hearing tested recently?

As you get older you should have your eyes tested at least once a year. You should also have your hearing tested every two years when you are over 60.

Do I have difficulty reading and doing work up close?

Printed materials are not as clear and it's harder to focus on near objects with the same ability as you get older.

Do I need more light to see when I am carrying out tasks?

To see well, your eyes need three times as much light when you're 60 as they did at age 20.

Do I have difficulty hearing?

Hearing can get worse with age. Around 40% of people over 50 in the UK have some form of hearing loss.

Assistive Technology Information

Assistive Technology (or **Telecare**) is a range of electronic gadgets that can help you to live independently in your own home. This can include devices for detecting falls.

For more information about Assistive Technology contact Welbeing on **01323 644422** or visit **welbeing.org.uk**



3 Right footwear

When purchasing footwear including slippers you should check that they fasten well, are supportive, have a sturdy sole and are not loose. If you are having problems with your feet you can discuss this with your doctor who may refer you for NHS chiropody or podiatry treatment. Alternatively, you can access this privately (see [nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk)).

Top tips

- Make sure you cut and file toenails and keep them at a comfortable length
- Check for cracks and breaks in the skin and inflammation such as blisters
- Look for signs of infection like nail fungus or other obvious early problems and seek professional advice
- Wear suitable socks and footwear
- Keep your feet clean, dry, mobile, comfortable and warm - you may find bed socks useful
- If it's difficult for you to carry out the above yourself, see a professional chiropodist/podiatrist for help



Questions to consider

Do I wear slippers indoors and nonslip sole shoes when going outside?

Consider changing your footwear as part of your fall prevention plan. High heels, sloppy slippers and shoes with slippy soles can make you slip, stumble and fall. So can walking just in socks or tights.

Instead, wear properly fitting, sturdy shoes with nonslip soles. Sensible shoes may also reduce joint pain.

Do I feel dizzy when standing up or getting out of bed?

Get out of bed slowly – sit up before you stand up to prevent dizziness. Sit down rather than trying to balance on one leg when dressing.

Do I find it hard to cut my toenails?

Trim your toenails regularly using proper nail clippers. Cut straight across, never at an angle or down the edges. This can cause ingrowing toenails.

Useful links

The Ask Sara website helps you find useful information about products that make daily living easier. Visit: asksara.dlf.org.uk



4 Medication

Taking more than four medications can increase the risk of falls due to their side effects. You should arrange to visit your doctor or local pharmacist (also known as chemist) for a medication review at least once a year. If you are having a hard time keeping track of medicines or are experiencing side effects, discuss your concerns with your doctor and pharmacist.

Top tips

- Ask your doctor or pharmacist for a medication review at least once a year
- Keep a list of all medications including prescriptions, over the counter medications, vitamins, and herbal remedies
- Keep all your medicines in the same place
- Ask questions about your medicines
- Use only one chemist for your medications where possible
- Take your medicine according to the directions
- Use a pill box or dispenser to help you remember to take the right medication each day

Questions to consider

Do I know what medication I am taking?

Make a list of your prescription and over-the-counter medications and supplements. Your pharmacist can help you to understand how best to take your medicines, and discuss any problems that could be related to the medication. Your doctor can review your medicines and overall health, and if needed will make changes to your prescription to reduce your risk of falls.

Do I feel dizzy or lose my balance?

Some medications may have side effects that can affect your balance. Tell your doctor if any of your medication is making you feel dizzy or unwell.

Have I noticed a change in my health since taking a new medication?

You should tell your doctor about any changes in your health and if any medicine makes you feel better or worse. Throw away medicines that are out of date and do not share medicines with family or friends.



5 Household items

There are lots of things both in the home and outside the home that could cause you to fall, yet doing a check regularly can help stop this happening.

Questions to consider

Have I got the right kind of walking aid?

A large number of falls in older people are related to walking aids. This means it is important that you use equipment which is appropriate to your needs. For instance, it needs to be the right height and weight.

Seek help from a physiotherapist if you are unsure.

Do I have to stretch for things?

Rearrange your cupboards so things you use often are easier to get to.

Do I need support when out walking?

Use your walking aid if needed. Walk carefully, be alert to pavement cracks, obstacles, slopes, slippery surfaces and other hazards. Also watch out for other people, traffic, and bicycles. Plan your trip so you do not have to go out during the rush hour, darkness or bad weather. You should also try not to load yourself down with shopping.



Checklist of household items that can cause you to fall and things you can do to stop this happening

You may wish to speak to a healthcare professional such as an Occupational Therapist about some of these suggested solutions.

Tick if action needed

| Household item? | Solution |
|-----------------|----------|
|-----------------|----------|

Living Room

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Low chair | Fix this by getting your chair raised or use a firm cushion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Low electrical sockets | Consider getting sockets moved to waist height or use remote controlled sockets |

Bedroom

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 Low bed, soft mattress | Raise or replace the bed/mattress |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4 Trailing bed covers | Use fitted sheets |

Bathroom

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5 Low toilet seat | Get a higher seat fitted, consider installing a grab rail |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6 Bathroom mats | Use non-slip mats |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 7 Struggling to get in and out of the bath | Consider a grab rail, bath board or bath lift. Or consider replacing the bath with an accessible shower |

Kitchen

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 8 Storage too high or too low | Have everyday items within easy reach |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9 No seating | Use a walking trolley to take things to another room |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10 Clutter on work surfaces | Keep a clear space to work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 11 Spills on surfaces/floor | Mop up spills immediately |

Raising Alarm

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 12 No phone by armchair | Consider a pendant alarm, cordless phone or mobile phone |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 13 No phone by the bed | Consider a cordless or mobile phone |

Checklist continued Tick if action needed

| Household item? | Solution |
|--|--|
| Outside your home | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 14 Uneven/broken pathways | Avoid area or ask someone to repair the area |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15 Two or more steps | Install a handrail |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 16 Narrow entrances | Remove any clutter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 17 Poor lighting | Install an outside light |
| Floors | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 18 Worn carpets | Repair or replace |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 19 Curled carpet edges | Tape down edges using double-sided tape |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 20 Sliding mats and rugs | Remove mat or rugs, or use non-slip mats or non-slip backing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 21 Wires/cables across walk areas | Organise your appliances so they are close to a socket. Use extension leads to run wires around edges of rooms |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 22 Restricted opening of doors | Consider rehanging door or widening doorway if possible or re-arrange furniture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 23 Limited space to walk | Re-arrange furniture |
| Lighting | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 24 Poor lighting on the stairs | Check wattage of bulbs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 25 Poor access to switches on lamps | Use remote sockets |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 26 Lack of light at night | Place a lamp next to the bed; use night lights to illuminate your path to the bathroom |
| Stairs | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 27 Lack of hand rails | Install hand rails on both sides |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 28 Objects on the stairs | Keep stairs free of clutter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 29 Loose or worn carpet | Fix the carpet firmly to every step or replace the carpet |

You can also do a check electronically by using the 'FallCheck' tool created by Coventry University cele.coventry.ac.uk/fallcheck/

6 Alcohol and hydration

Be sensible about alcohol

You should drink alcohol sensibly. Even moderate drinking can increase your risk of having a fall.

Mixing alcohol and medicines can also be harmful. Combining alcohol with some medicines can lead to falls and serious injuries, especially among older people.

If you are taking prescription drugs and you are unsure whether it is safe to drink alcohol, please check with your doctor or your pharmacist.

Importance of staying hydrated

Drinking plenty of fluids to stay hydrated can help prevent dehydration and reduce your risk of falling

Top tips for good hydration

- Keep a water bottle close by to drink throughout the day
- Sip a drink during meals
- Drink before and after physical activity
- Choose a large size cup to drink from
- Swap dry snacks for fruit and veg



Your personal falls action plan

- Have you checked your home/outside your home for hazards?
- Have you had your eyes checked in the last 12 months?
- Have you had a hearing test in the last two years?
- Do you do exercise on a weekly basis which increases your heart rate?
- Do you do exercises to improve your balance? Examples include tai-chi, yoga and dancing.
- Do you wear footwear that is supportive and not loose both at home and outside?
- If you take more than four medications, have you had a medication review in the last year?



Getting up from a fall

The first thing you need to do after a fall is to lie still for a minute or two, stay calm then work out if you're hurt. Take a few minutes to check your body for any pain or injuries, then:

- If you are unhurt, and think you can get up, try to get up using the steps below to get up onto a chair (make sure you rest between steps if you need to)
- If you are hurt or unable to get off the floor, call for help and keep warm and moving as best you can

1



Ease yourself up onto your elbows

2



Move onto your hands and knees

3



Hold onto a firm surface to support yourself

4

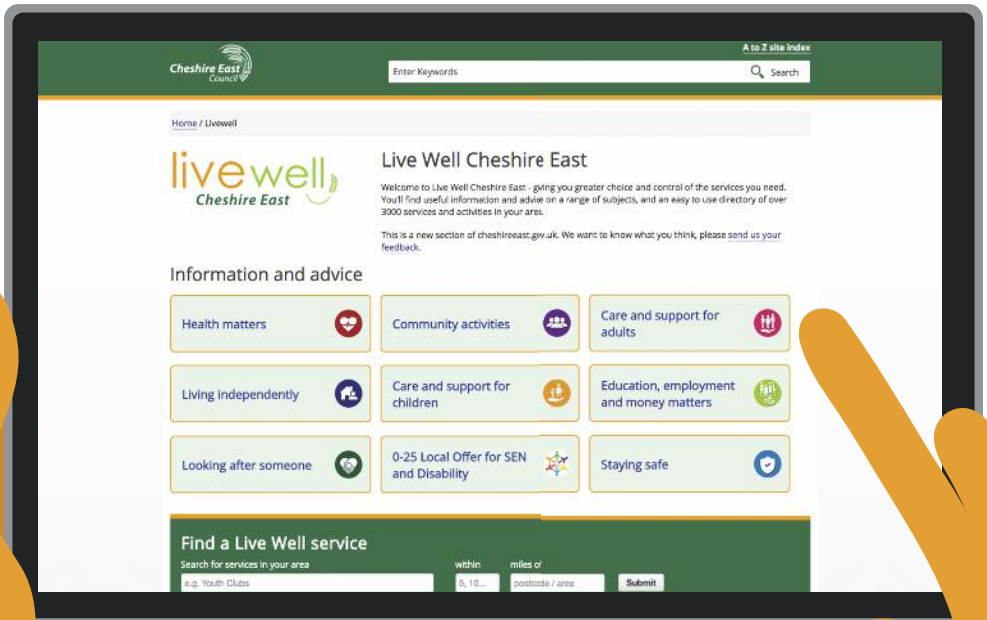


Facing the chair ease yourself to a standing position

5



Turn yourself gently and sit on a firm surface



Go online to find

Information and advice

Easy to use directory of services, support and activities

Visit: cheshireeast.gov.uk/livewell

Visit: cheshirechangehub.org
or westcheshirelocaloffer.co.uk

If you found this leaflet helpful or would suggest any changes please contact cheshirewest.icp@nhs.net



Produced on behalf of all partners.