



Top tips to prevent trips and falls

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.

Many falls can be prevented and there are things you can do to stay mobile, safely.

Balance and muscle strength

We lose muscle 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 and search 'six simple exercise to stop falls'
- Local physical activity and exercise groups are available:

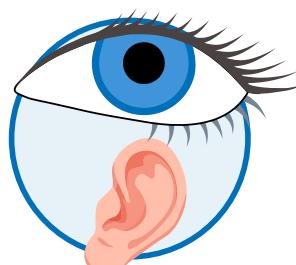
Solihull – Solihull Active **0121 704 8207**

Birmingham – The Active Wellbeing Society **0121 728 7030**



Vision and hearing

- 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
- 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 ill-fitting slippers – they may be comfortable but they increase your risk of trips and falls, especially on the stairs



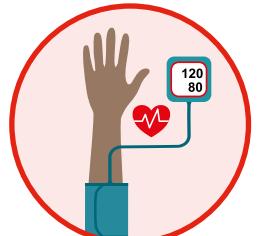
Medicines

- Medicines such as anti-depressants or sleeping tablets can make you drowsy or uncoordinated 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 you have these side effects



Dizziness

- Dizziness is a common symptom. See your GP if dizziness is making you feel unsteady
- Postural hypotension can cause dizziness with 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



In your home

- Try to declutter – the more clutter you have, the more you're likely to trip over it
- Rugs are a trip hazard so should be avoided. If you do have rugs, make sure they're fixed down properly with an anti-slip backing.
- Don't leave things like wires, shoes and bags where you can trip over them
- Minor repairs and adaptations such as grab rails can be helpful. Get advice:
Solihull – Solihull Community Housing **0121 717 1515**
Birmingham – Age UK **0800 055 6112**



- Ask for advice from an occupational therapist for major adaptations, for example if you need help getting in the bath or getting upstairs:

Solihull – Solihull Connect **0121 704 8007**

Birmingham – Adult Social Care **0121 303 1234**

- West Midlands Fire Service carry out 'Safe and well' visits and will check your home for fire safety and give advice – **0800 389 5525**
- If you live alone and are worried about falling, carry a mobile phone or get a pendant alarm so you can call for help if you need to. For advice on pendant alarms:
Solihull – Solihull Community Housing **0121 717 1515**
Birmingham – Careline **0121 303 3826**

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
- Changing to decaf tea and coffee can help with an overactive bladder and reduce falls



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.theros.org.uk or by calling **0808 800 0035**



Specialist assessment for falls is available in Birmingham and Solihull, please ask your GP or healthcare professional if this could be useful to you.

If you require this information in another format, such as a different language, large print, braille or audio version please ask a member of staff or email interpreting.service@uhb.nhs.uk.



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