

**for
patients,
relatives,
carers and
friends**

Fall prevention support and education

It may not be possible to prevent all falls but working together we can reduce the chances of this happening.

***Integrated Pathways, Falls Prevention
Colchester & Ipswich Hospitals***



What can I do?

The following twelve-point checklist can be used by patients and their carers and families.



Tell the nurse or doctor looking after you if you have fallen in the last year, are worried about falling, or have a history of falls.



Use your call bell if you need help to move, in particular, if you need help going to the toilet.



Make sure glasses are clean and used as prescribed.

Ask for help if you are having trouble seeing.



Use your usual walking aid, keep it close by and check for wear and tear on the rubber feet. Never lean on hospital furniture as it's often on wheels.



When getting up:

- sit upright for a few moments on the edge of your bed before standing
- get up slowly and making sure you feel steady before walking.



Do some simple leg exercises before getting up from your bed or chair:

- point your toes and release a few times
- tighten the muscles in your calves and then release them
- move your legs up and down if you can, to get the circulation going.



If you feel dizzy – stop, sit down, and let the ward staff know.



Drink regularly and eat well.



Be familiar with your bedside environment. Ask for clutter to be moved if your path isn't clear.



Make sure your shoes or slippers fit well, grip well and cannot fall off.



Take care in the bathroom and toilet. Ask for help if you need assistance.



It is also important to make sure that you receive a falls risk assessment.



How can others help?

Your family, friends, or carers can also help reduce the risk of falls with this checklist.

Tell the ward staff

- if you think your relative/friend is at risk of falling
- if your relative/friend:
 - ~ has fallen in the last year
 - ~ is feeling dizzy, confused or not their normal selves (could this be delirium?)
 - ~ has dementia
 - ~ has a vision impairment
- if there is a spillage that may cause a slip hazard.

Before family, friends or carers leave

- Check the bed space – and area around it – is clear of obstacles.
- Make sure the call bell, walking aid and glasses are within reach.
- Ensure they take any belongings that aren't needed with them.

The hospital team

We will assess your risk of falling by asking you questions about any previous falls, fear of falling, your walking and balance.

We will then carry out a full **multi-factorial falls risk assessment** and look at lots of different things that can put you at risk of falling. We will then alter your care accordingly to reduce the risks.

This may include an assessment for **bed rails**. Bedrails help to prevent rolling or sliding off the bed. They can be useful for some patients but for others they may create a barrier to independence and could be dangerous, especially if the patient is likely to try to climb over them.

Low-rise bed frames and alarm mats/sensor panels may be used to maintain your safety.

You may be moved to a more **observable bed** or moved into a bay where there are more staff present.

Medical / Doctor

The doctors will complete a full medical assessment and tailor your treatment, investigations and medications as appropriate



Nutrition/Dietitian

Good nutrition is important for strong bones. Try to maintain a healthy weight and avoid dieting. Instead, aim for a variety of meals, including lots of fruit and vegetables, even while in hospital.

Hospital meals are nutritious and the hospital has systems in place to help ensure you eat and drink well.

These include:

- red trays to identify patients who may need additional support with meals
- protected meal times, which ensure you are not disturbed by staff during your meals
- additional ward-based snacks, if necessary.

Dietitians are experts in using nutrition and diet to prevent and manage disease. Please tell your nurse or doctor if you have a poor appetite, as this increases your risk of falls.

A healthy and balanced diet, including calcium and vitamin D, is important for good health and strong bones.



Calcium

Calcium keeps your bones strong and rigid. The main sources should come from your diet.



Good sources:

- dairy products
- green vegetables
- beans and lentils
- nuts and seeds
- fortified cereals, milk and milk products
- tinned fish with bones.

Vitamin D

Vitamin D is necessary for healthy bones. The main source is sunlight. Try going outside for 15 minutes, 2–3 times a week, without sunscreen, from April to September.



Good sources of vitamin D

- Oily fish
- Eggs
- Fortified cereals, milk and milk products

As you get older, it is more difficult for your body to manage vitamin D so, we may advise you to take a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms (mcg) of vitamin D (equivalent to 400 international units).



Pharmacy/Medicines

- Taking more than four different medicines can increase your risk of having a fall.
- Some medicines are associated with an increased risk of falls due to their side-effects. For example:
 - sleeping tablets
 - pain relief medication
 - heart tablets, including water tablets
 - medicines for mental health conditions.



When you are admitted to hospital, pharmacists will:

- establish your medication history
- identify high risk medications and prompt doctors to review them according to your needs and response.
- monitor you and review your medications
- re-start medications according to your needs (if it is safe to do so).

Some of your usual medications may be stopped or withheld temporarily while you are in hospital.



Please ensure you take all medications as prescribed and given to you by the nurses. If you are unsure about any of them – please ask



When you go home from hospital (discharge)

- Make sure you have at least 7–14 days' supply of medication.
- Your medication record card will be provided to you.
- You will be given a discharge letter that contains important information about discharge medicines, such as what has been started or stopped (with reasons). A copy will also be sent to your GP.



Physiotherapy

Physiotherapy helps to restore movement, function and independence after an injury or fall.

The physiotherapist can also give you important exercises to do to help improve your balance, muscle strength, bone strength and confidence in order to reduce your risk of falling again.

Balance

As we age, our reaction times get slower. We can improve our balance with simple exercises.



Muscle strength

Between the ages of 50 and 70, we lose about 30% of our muscle strength. Muscle-strengthening exercises help to maintain our independence and keep us stable.



Bones

Bones naturally become more brittle as we age, which increases the chances of breaking a bone if we fall. Weight-bearing activities can help to improve bone strength.



Feet and footwear

Our feet change shape as we age and we lose some feeling and flexibility. Take care of your feet and nails, and wear well-fitting supportive shoes or slippers.

Walking aids

Don't be embarrassed to use a walking aid if it helps you stay steady and keeps you moving.

It is important that the stick or frame is the right height for you and in good repair – especially the rubber end at the bottom (the ferrule), which stops you from slipping.

A physiotherapist should assess you to recommend the most suitable walking aid for you.

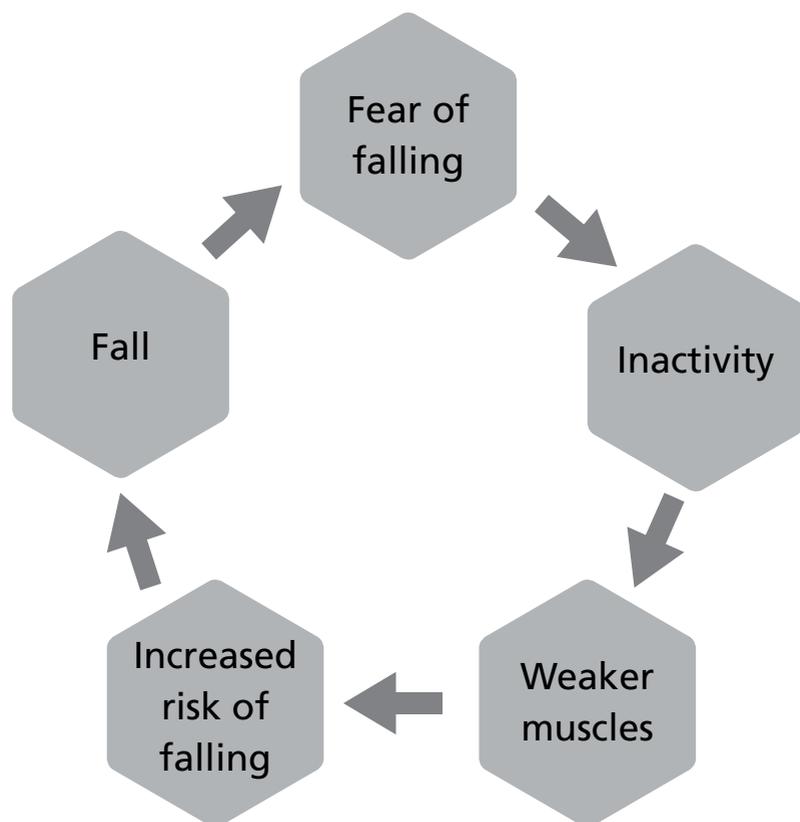


Confidence

Some people are so worried about falling that they restrict their movements and spend long periods sitting down. This harms balance, strength and mobility which in turn makes a fall more likely. This is a vicious circle!

Stay positive

Take small steps to keep moving and practise relaxation when you feel anxious.



A physiotherapist can also discuss with you what you should do if you do fall over again.

If you fall again	
Lie still for a minute – stay calm and check for injuries	
I'm unhurt – I think I can get up ↓ We can teach you the best ways to try to get up and if you are well enough we can practise this with you while you are on the ward.	I'm in pain – I'm unable to get up ↓ We can help you make a plan how will you get help (we can provide information about care line services if needed) and what to do whilst you wait for help.

Continuing at home

We can refer you to outpatient or community therapy teams to continue working towards further improvements in your balance, strength and confidence.

The therapy teams will contact you once you are home to arrange an appointment. If you don't hear from them after a few weeks, please check the progress of the referral.

Occupational therapy and falls

Occupational therapy enables people who have had a fall to stay safe at home and to improve their independence in daily activities. An occupational therapist achieves this by providing practical support to help people overcome any barriers that prevent them from doing the activities that matter to them.

Functional ability

Keeping active and doing daily activities in or outside your home will give you a greater sense of control of your life.



Incorporate activities for strength and balance into your daily routine and activities. By doing this, you are more likely to continue to carry out meaningful activities over the longer term and this will help to maintain your independence.

An occupational therapist will work with you to explore whether lack of confidence is restricting your activity and influencing your daily life. They will also work with you, your family, friends and carers to adopt a positive approach to balancing risk and activity, increasing your confidence and enabling you to take realistic risks.



Keeping safe at home

There is strong evidence that an assessment of your home and the hazards within it is effective for individuals at a high risk of falls. The home assessment looks at:

- access to property
- steps and stairs
- kitchen
- bathroom
- living room
- bedroom

General safety tips

- Keep emergency phone numbers close by and within easy reach.
- Keep rooms well-lit.
- Avoid loose rugs or mats.
- Make sure your carpets are well-fitted and not loose.
- Make sure door handles and rails are securely fitted.
- Make sure you can answer the door safely.



**Stay Safe
&
Keep Active**

Quick reference:

Important take-home messages

- 1 Stay safe – staff are here to help, so ask for help if you need it.
- 2 A healthy and balanced diet including calcium and vitamin D is important for healthy and strong bones.
- 3 A regular review of your medication is important.
- 4 Strength, balance and 'bone loading' exercises can reduce your risk of falling or of breaking a bone if you do fall.
- 5 Stay safe – small changes in your home may help.

You can also view a short film about preventing falls produced at Colchester Hospital using this link:
www.esneft.nhs.uk/service/falls-prevention/

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