

STEADY ON YOUR FEET

Devon

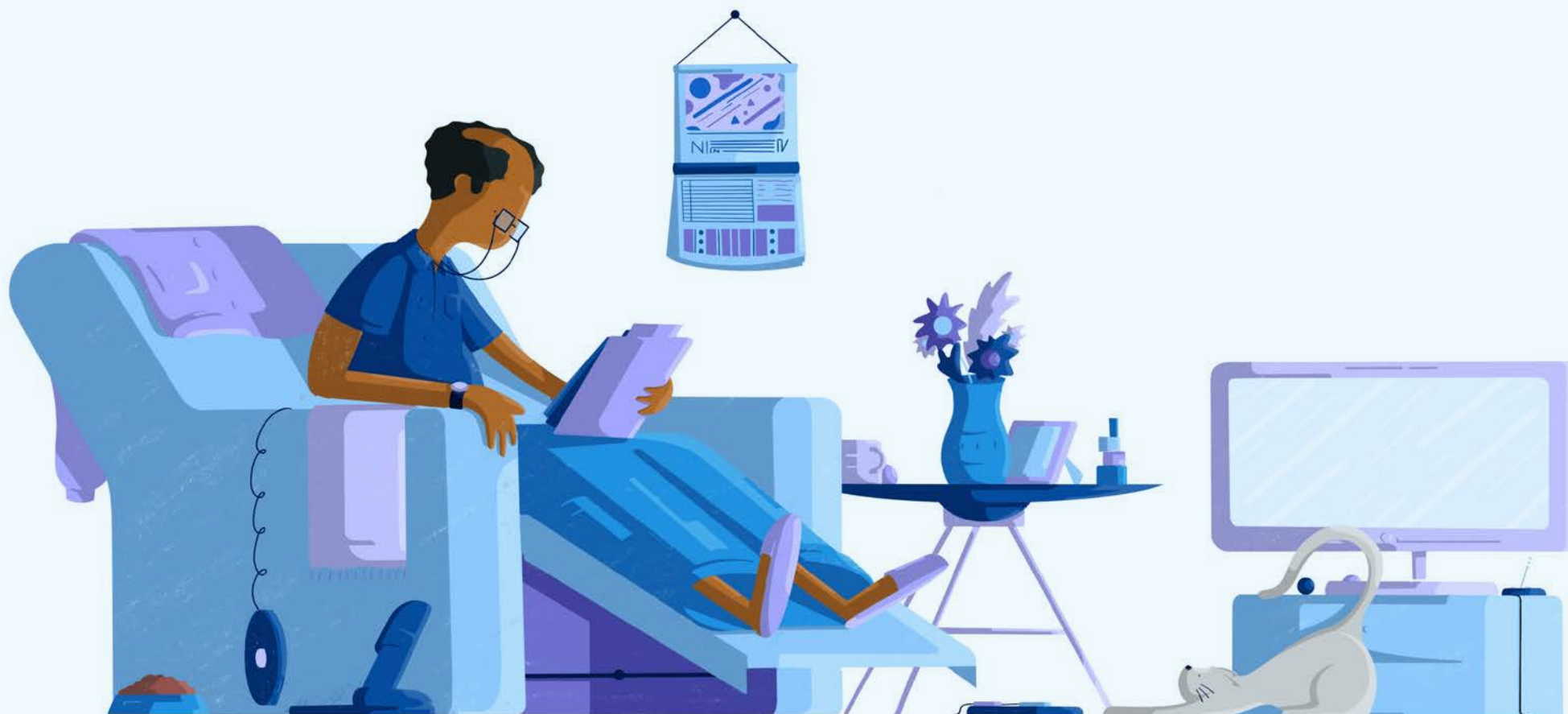


Fall Prevention Guide

If you've recently had a fall or felt unsteady on your feet, it can really impact your confidence and the way you get around.

Falling is a common problem but it's not an inevitable part of ageing. In fact, it can often be avoided if simple advice is followed. This guide is full of ideas to help reduce the risks and increase your confidence. It is designed for anyone who may be worried about feeling unsteady on their feet. It can be completed by you or you can ask someone you know to help. The guide also includes lots of advice on what to do if you, or someone else, falls.

The evidence used to develop this guide is for those aged 65 years and over. However, if you are under 65 years of age you may still find it useful.





BLACKOUTS

Have you blacked out or fainted in the past year? Yes No

People sometimes blackout or faint, even for just a second causing them to fall.

If you can't remember how you fell or you have suffered facial injuries, you may have blacked out.

Make an appointment to see your doctor or nurse practitioner.



MEDICINES

Do you take medication? Yes No

Some medicines can make you more likely to fall. Follow the advice below to minimise this risk:

- Follow the instructions for taking your medicines
- Ask a community pharmacist for a medication review and advise them that you are concerned about the risk of falls
- Be aware of feeling dizzy or drowsy – speak to a pharmacist if you are concerned

Note: It is important you do not stop taking a medicine without first asking your doctor.



DIZZINESS

Do you feel dizzy at times? Yes No

There are many different causes for dizziness but you may find the following advice helps:

If you feel dizzy when you stand up:

- Change position slowly and exercise your arms and legs before rising
- Sit back down again if you feel dizzy and wait until it passes
- Stand still or walk on the spot when you first get up, don't rush

Drink plenty of fluids during the day

- If you have been prescribed diuretics, 'water tablets' or you are on a fluid restriction, please continue to observe the amount advised.

Discuss your symptoms with a community pharmacist if you are taking medication, particularly medication related to blood pressure

Ensure you have had a hearing assessment recently

If you feel like the world is moving or spinning, contact your GP surgery





ENVIRONMENT

Many falls occur within the home, but following some simple advice can help to minimise the risk:

- When bathing and showering, use a non-slip mat, leave the bathroom door unlocked and do not have the water too hot
- Have a light by your bed, or use a nightlight, in case you need to get up in the night
- Warn visitors that it may take a little longer to answer the door and try not to hurry to the door or telephone
- Take care if you use furniture to support you when you walk as it may topple or move. This may indicate you need a walking aid, see further help
- Keep rooms and stairways well-lit and ensure all rugs are tacked down or removed
- Make sure all electric wires and cables are tucked away
- You may wish to spread your activities over the day to prevent getting overtired
- If you already have a walking aid, check it for wear and tear regularly and change any rubber feet (ferrules) when worn; these can be purchased from hardware stores or mobility shops
- **Complete the Home Safety Checklist for more advice**





MOVEMENT & EXERCISE

Do you feel weak or unsteady when standing or walking? Yes No

Feeling weak or unsteady can increase your risk of falls. Below is some basic advice to help you reduce this risk:

- Keeping active is important to improve bone health, muscle strength, balance and confidence
- Before starting any new exercise, consider what you are able to do safely; start gently and speak to a healthcare professional or exercise specialist if you have any concerns
- Gradually build up the amount of exercises you do during the day and avoid sitting still for more than an hour at a time
- It is recommended that all adults complete moderate intensity exercise for 2.5 hours each week. Consider what you would enjoy doing that would challenge you depending on your ability. e.g walking/ dancing/ swimming
- Try to include exercise that will increase your strength (yoga, weights, carrying shopping) and balance (dancing, Tai Chi, bowls) at least twice each week
- Remember – Keeping active is vital. If you feel unsteady and a walking aid helps you feel steady and keep active this is your ticket to freedom. Using a walking aid is not ‘giving up’, it is a way of enabling you to maintain fitness including strength, balance and stamina. All of which support independence. If you are unsure what kind of aid would meet your needs, please see further help page to refer to your local rehabilitation team.
- **See the further help page for the CSP/ SAGA guide on the Get Up and Go balance exercises**
- **If you would prefer to attend an exercise class contact your local Leisure Centre or Active Devon for further information**



VISION

Has it been more than 12 months since your last eye test? Yes No

Your eyesight helps you to move around safely and stay steady on your feet. You may have worn glasses for years, but that doesn't mean the lenses in your glasses are right for you now. Make sure you:

- Have your eyesight checked yearly (remember your eyesight tests are free if you are 60 or over)
- Wear your glasses as advised and keep them clean and in good condition
- Take care on steps and stairs when you wear your glasses especially if you wear varifocals or bifocals
- Inform your optician if you have had a fall or are worried about falling
- If you are unable to go out and about, contact your optician to ask if they can visit you at home
- If you are registered blind or partially sighted there are additional services that can offer you support . See the further help page for the RNIB contact details





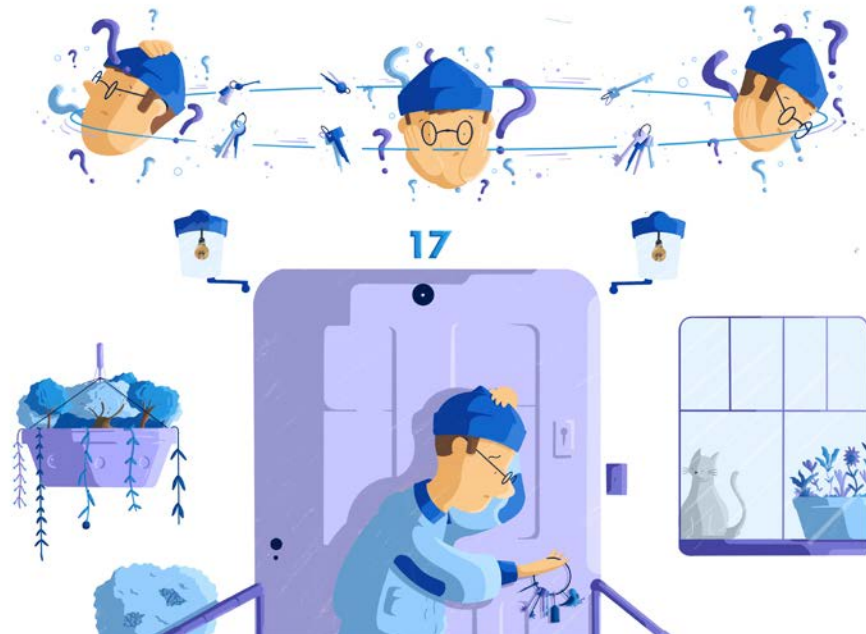
MEMORY

Have you noticed a change in your memory recently?

Yes No

As we get older, problems with memory loss, confusion, difficulties with thinking and problem solving can become more common. This can affect your judgement and recognition of hazards, leading to an increased risk of falls.

- Keep your brain active by completing puzzles, crosswords and memory games
- Keep yourself oriented by reading or listening to the news and making a note of the date each day.
- **Contact your GP surgery for further assessment if you are worried about your memory**



NUTRITION & HYDRATION

Do you find it difficult to eat a healthy balanced diet?

Yes No

What you eat does make a difference. It is important to eat a well-balanced diet to obtain all the protein, vitamins, minerals and other nutrients that your body requires. This will help keep your body strong and healthy, and in turn may help prevent falls.

- Keep a food diary for a week – are you eating less than normal? Are you eating a well-balanced diet i.e meat (or other source of protein), dairy, fibre, fruit and vegetables?
- **Are you having difficulty shopping or preparing food? Speak to relatives or friends who may be able to help; also consider supermarket or meal delivery services**
- **Contact social services if you are having particular difficulties preparing meals and other daily activities**
- **If you are losing weight for an unknown reason, seek advice from your GP surgery**



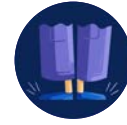
BONE HEALTH

Have you broken (fractured) a bone after a minor bump or fall over the age of 50?

Yes No

Breaking a bone after a fall may mean that you are at risk of osteoporosis and further fractures. There are several things you can do to promote good bone health:

- Stop smoking as this can damage the bone building cells in your body
- Keep your alcohol intake low – excessive alcohol can destroy bones and make you unsteady
- Try to take some sort of weight bearing exercise
 - If you have not broken a bone before, exercise which encourages moderate impact as jogging, jumping, stamping would be beneficial
 - If you have had a previous fracture or are diagnosed with osteoporosis, The Royal Osteoporosis Society will provide advice on which exercises may be suitable for you (see further help page)
 - Alternatively speak to your physiotherapist
- It is recommended to take vitamin D supplements, particularly over the winter months or if you do not go outdoors. These are available in supermarkets or pharmacies
- Ensure you include plenty of calcium in your diet (1000mg a day)
- **See your GP if you have fractured and haven't discussed your bone health with another professional**



FEET

Do you have problems with your feet which affect walking?

Yes No

It is important to take care of your feet because problems like long toe nails, loss of feeling and poor footwear can make you unsteady, as well as causing discomfort.

- Wear footwear that protects and supports your feet including well fitting slippers
- Wear shoes with non-slip soles that are not too thick
- Avoid high heels and backless footwear
- Trim your toenails or use a long handled file regularly – this is easier after bathing when nails are softer. A chiropodist can help with this
- **If you notice a change in the normal sensation of your feet, speak to your GP**
- Don't ignore minor foot problems – they are unlikely to get better by themselves – if you are in any doubt, a podiatrist or chiropodist can help; this is especially important if you have diabetes





BLADDER/BOWEL

Do you have one or more of the following problems?

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Rushing to get to the toilet? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Going to the toilet frequently? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Going to the toilet more than once a night? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Frequent water infections? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

Falls can occur when people have to rush to the toilet or need to go frequently. There are a number of things you can do to keep your bladder and bowel healthy:

- Drink 6 to 8 cups of fluid per day (unless advised otherwise)
- Try to minimise the amount of drinks containing caffeine or alcohol
- Eat a balanced diet with plenty of fibre eg. wholegrain bread, cereals, peas and beans and fruit and veg
- If you find it difficult getting to the toilet at night, a commode or urinal may be helpful. A Local Mobility Shop or the Independent Living Centre can advise on these. See further help page
- **Don't be embarrassed, speak to your GP surgery or healthcare professional to enquire if a continence assessment is appropriate for ongoing issues**



FEAR OF FALLING

Do you worry about being unsteady on your feet or have you lost confidence because of a fall? Yes No

Anyone can have a fall – you are not alone! It's frightening and often people will lose confidence. Do any of the following ring true?

1. You're more careful with your walking, maybe slower or simply doing less
2. You're leaving the house less often, or not going as far
3. You're worried about what might happen if you fall again

All of the above are common, and if they apply to you it may mean you've lost some of your confidence when getting around. If your anxiety is effective your daily life talking to someone about your concerns may help. **Speak to an appropriate healthcare professional or Talkworks (see further help page).**

Remember, there are lots of things that you can do to reduce your risk of falling and improve your confidence. It is really important to keep moving as this maintains muscle strength, see the movement and exercise section for more information.

You've taken action by completing this guide, ensure you follow up on the actions you've agreed.



WHAT IF I DO FALL?

Whilst we hope that you have reduced your risk of falls, knowing what to do if you fall can give you peace of mind.

If you are worried about falling when you are alone at home, you might want to:

- Consider creating a falls plan so you and your family know what will happen
- Have a pendant alarm or mobile phone with you at all times. It may also be helpful to keep a phone at a lower level
- There are also telecare sensors available such as falls detectors for people who would not be able to press a pendant alarm. See further help page for Care Direct contact details
- Keep a dining chair in any room that doesn't have furniture that might help you stand up
- Make sure there are blankets in each room so that you can keep warm

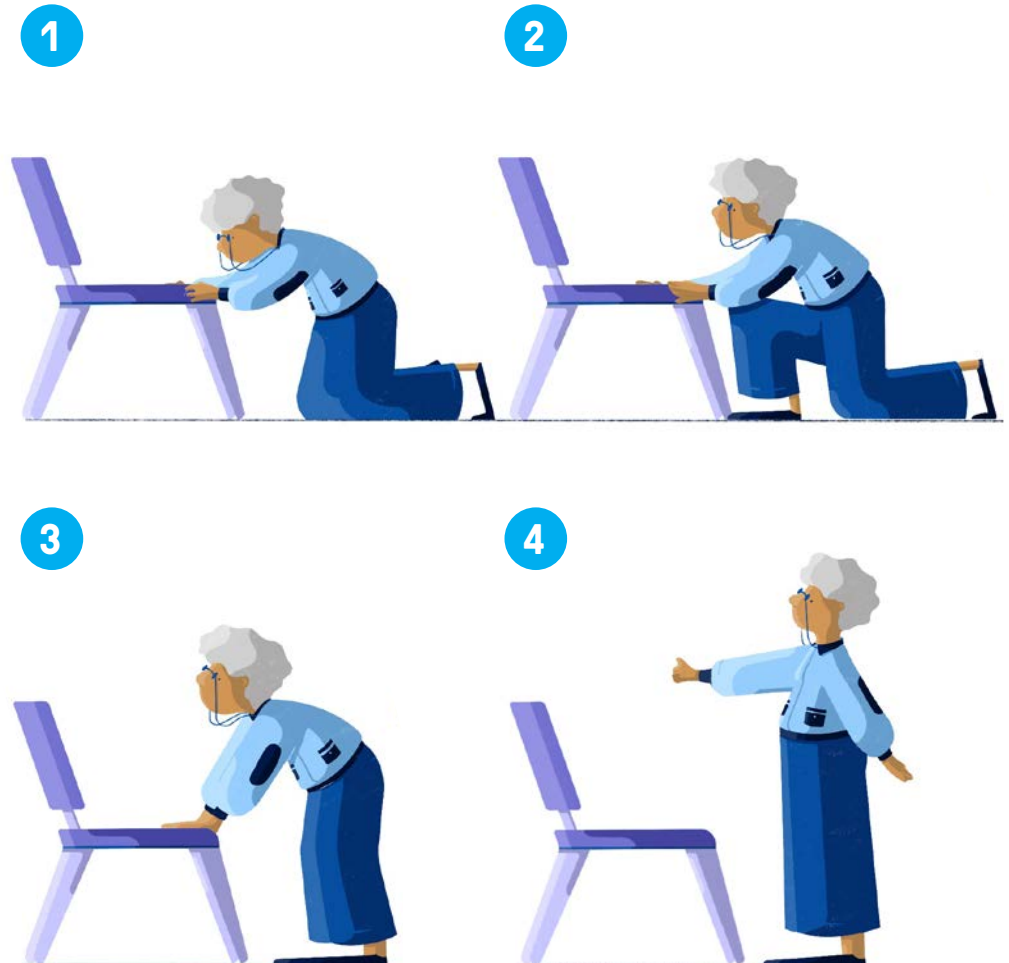
If you are hurt or unable to get up:

- Summon help by using your pendant alarm, calling out, crawling to a telephone or banging on a wall
- Use a blanket to keep you warm
- Move to a softer surface if you are able
- Change position regularly if you are able

If you are unhurt and feel you can get up:

- Roll over onto your hands and knees
- Crawl to a stable piece of furniture such as an armchair and use this to assist you with getting up
- Turn and sit on a chair or bed and rest for a while

If you do fall, even if you're not injured it is really important to let someone know. It may also be helpful to keep a falls diary to track and falls you have. This may allow patterns and trends be identified and reduced.



FURTHER HELP

Further information and support is available on steadyonyourfeet.org.

For general advice:

AGE UK

Contact number: 0800 678 1602

Tackling the issues of loneliness and isolation to improve wellbeing. We know that growing older doesn't come with a manual. That's why we provide free information and advice to help you on topics as diverse as claiming benefits to care homes.

Care Direct

Contact number: 0345 155 1007

They can provide advice and support working with adults in Devon for whom activities of daily living (because of illness, older age, or a disability) can be difficult. The aim is to help people to live as independently as possible, for as long as possible. They are able to support with getting a personal pendant alarm.

Independent Living Centre

Contact number: 01392 390181

Website: www.independentlivingcentre.org.uk

Advice and information about equipment solutions to stay safe, independent and active at home.

OneSmallStep

Contact number: 0800 298 2654 or 01392 908 139

A Devon County Council funded initiative that helps people lose weight, stop smoking, reduce alcohol intake and become more active.

Pinpoint Devon

Website: www.pinpointdevon.co.uk

Providing health and support information for living well and staying safe. They have a directory of community services and groups across Devon.

Devon and Somerset Fire Brigade

Contact number: 01392 872200

Website: www.dsfire.gov.uk

They can carry out Fire Home Safety Check. Advice on fire safety, making an escape plan, fire safety equipment and what to do in the event of a fire. They also provide fire safety advice for people with sight, vision or hearing difficulties. Advice for disabled people and carers.

For personal alarm pendant:

East Devon: Home Safeguard Alarm Services

Contact number: 0330 678 2381

Exeter: Home Call Alarms

Contact number: 01392 682349

Mid Devon: Lifeline Alarms

Contact number: 01884 255255

North Devon: Care Direct

Contact number: 0345 155 1007

For further assessment if you are struggling to manage around your home:

Community Rehabilitation Local Team Contact Numbers:

Axminster
01297 630435

Crediton
01363 777561

Exeter Central and East
01392 465666

Exeter South and West
01392 908616

Exmouth, Budleigh & Woodbury:
01395 282021

Okehampton
01837 658029

Seaton Rehab
01297 626740

Sidmouth
01395 519909

Tiverton
01884 235492

North Devon & Torrington
Please contact your GP for referral to the rehabilitation team.

If you are unsure which team to contact, please contact your GP surgery to be referred for an assessment.

For Keeping Active:

Active Devon

Website: <https://www.activedevon.org/>

They work together with communities and partners, to connect, advocate and enable people to move more.

Chartered Society of Physiotherapists

Six exercises for staying steady.

Website: www.csp.org.uk/publications/get-go-guide-supplement-six-exercises-staying-steady

Royal Osteoporosis Society

For information on osteoporosis and suitable exercises

Contact number: 0808 800 0035

Website: theros.org.uk

Other useful links:

Talk Works

Contact number: 0300 555 3344

Website: <https://www.talkworks.dpt.nhs.u>

Talkworks is a Devonwide (excluding Plymouth) initiative, if the way you are feeling is affecting your daily life. It can help you to feel better and giving you the tools and techniques to improve your mental and physical wellbeing.

RNIB

Website: <https://www.rnib.org.uk>

One of the UK's leading sight loss charities and the largest community of blind and partially sighted people. We recognise everyone's unique experience of sight loss and offer help and support for blind and partially sighted people – this can be anything from practical and emotional support, campaigning for more accessible transport, reading services and the products we offer in our online shop.

**STEADY ON
YOUR FEET**

www.steadyonyourfeet.org/devon