

Preventing Falls

Patient Introduction

As we get older, our bodies change and we become more vulnerable to falls.

Every year about a third of people aged over 65 slip, trip or fall over. Some of these falls result in broken bones and hospital admissions. A fall can also reduce your confidence and make you afraid of falling again. Many of the risks that cause falls can be avoided by simple prevention methods.

This leaflet contains information and advice on how to prevent falls and remain fit, healthy and independent in your home.

Useful tips to help prevent falls

Use this checklist to reduce the risk of falling at home:

Living room

- Check for trip hazards such as loose wires
- Think about arranging the furniture so that there are clear walkways and keep them clear by removing clutter
- Avoid using rugs, but if you do, make sure they are secured down
- Ensure carpets are secured down and use door bars to secure edges at doorways.

Kitchen

- Avoid over stretching or bending. Consider whether you use or need the things stored high on shelves, cupboards or dressers
- Keep things within easy reach
- Avoid climbing on chairs and stools
- Clean up any spills immediately.

Stairs and hallway

- Use the handrail and make sure it is secure
- Keep stairs clutter-free
- Put marker strips on the edge of stairs so you can see them easier
- Avoid carrying loads up and down stairs
- Make sure halls and stairs are well lit.

Bedroom

- Turn on the lights at night when getting out of bed
- Keep a torch beside your bed in case of a power cut
- Avoid leaving books and magazines lying on the floor beside the bed
- Use night lights.

Bathroom

- Use a non-slip mat in the bath and shower
- Use grab rails by the bath and toilet.

Clothing and footwear

- Take care with clothes that trail such as trousers, saris and dressing gowns and avoid wearing long trailing nightwear. Be extra careful when walking on slippery floors in socks or tights
- Ensure slippers and shoes fit securely and try to avoid shoes with high heels, or mules.

Garden

- Check your garden is free from potential hazards which may cause a slip, trip or fall.

Tips on how to stay independent

Keeping fit: Regular, daily exercise helps to improve your balance, increase your flexibility and build your strength. All forms of physical activity including gardening, walking and dancing help. Ready Steady Go classes are available across the county which help individuals to improve their strength and balance. To access these you will need to be referred by your GP, Health Visitor or Nurse Advisor.

The County Council and your local Health Improvement Coordinator, (see useful contacts section) will have details on where the classes are held, as well as other local exercise information.

It is also important to have regular hearing and vision checks.

Healthy eating: Regular healthy meals help keep up strength and balance. Eat meals with lots of vegetables and fruit and include an adequate intake of calcium and vitamin D in your diet, as this will help to maintain bone health.

Drink plenty of fluids (water, tea) and don't skip meals as it can cause weakness and dizziness. For more advice contact the Food Standards Agency, (see useful contacts section).

Medication: Some medicines can make you feel faint or unsteady. Let your doctor know if you ever feel like this after taking medication as they may want to change the dose or medicine. Speak to your pharmacist or GP for a medicine review.

Alcohol: Alcohol can dull your senses, affect the quality of your sleep, alter your balance and impair your judgment, all of which might increase your risk of falling. Use alcohol in moderation and avoid mixing alcohol with medications – check with your pharmacist if you are concerned.

If you fall

If you have a fall, it is important you tell your GP or another healthcare professional you may be in contact with.

Useful contact information

NHS Worcestershire Falls Prevention

01905 681769

Website: www.worcestershire.nhs.uk

NHS Worcestershire Patient Relations Team

0800 917 7919

Website: www.worcestershire.nhs.uk

Worcestershire HUB

(for all council services)

0800 389 2896

Website: www.whub.org.uk

Age UK Herefordshire and Worcestershire

(Wellcheck assessments, Handypersons,
Help at Home, Safety Checks)

0800 008 6077 / 0800 169 6565

Website: www.ageuk.org.uk

Telecare service

0845 607 2000

Website: www.whub.org.uk

Worcestershire UK Carers Unit

0800 389 2896

Website: www.worcestershire.gov.uk/carers

Worcestershire Carewise website

Website: www.whub.org.uk/carewise

Worcestershire Access Centre

0845 607 2000

Mobile Occupational Therapist service

01527 869148

0207 276 8829

Food Standards Agency

(healthy eating)

Website: www.eatwell.gov.uk

Patient UK

Website: www.patient.co.uk

Act on Energy

Website: www.actonenergy.org.uk

To find out about Ready Steady Go classes and other local exercise information, contact your local Health Improvement Coordinator:

- **Worcester**

01905 721143

- **Bromsgrove**

01527881311

- **Malvern**

01684 862283

- **Wyre Forest**

01562 732576

- **Redditch**

01527 64252 - ext 3639

Patient Experience

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

Feedback

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

How to contact PALS:

Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: wah-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Opening times:

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that you may need to leave a voicemail message, but we aim to return your call within one working day. If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.

For additional medical advice, if your symptoms or condition worsens:

Contact your GP

NHS 111:

Get help with your symptoms, NHS111:
Information to help you manage your health:

Telephone 111

<https://111.nhs.uk/>
www.nhs.uk

In an emergency telephone 999

Emergency Department (A&E)
Alexandra Hospital
Woodrow Drive
Redditch B98 7UB

Tel: 01527 512030

Minor Injury Unit
Kidderminster Hospital
Bewdley Road
Kidderminster DY11 6RJ

Tel: 01562 513039

Emergency Department (A&E)
Worcestershire Royal Hospital
Charles Hastings Way
Worcester WR5 1DD

Tel: 01905 760743