

Staying independent at home – preventing falls

There are a few things for you and your carer to think about to help you stay independent and on your feet after leaving hospital. These include:

Be active

- It is important to slowly build up to a level suited to your needs. Talk to your doctor before you start any new activity.
- Speak to your physiotherapist about exercises that can build balance, strength and flexibility to reduce your risk of falling.

Identify, remove and report hazards

- Speak to an occupational therapist if you need advice on carrying out daily activities. They can also check your home for hazards and make changes that may be needed for a safer home.
- Use walking aids that have been **prescribed to you**, including short-term aids if you are recovering from surgery or an injury.

Manage your medications

- If you have been taking medication it is important you know what your medicines are for and what their effects are before you leave hospital. A doctor or pharmacist can give you more information about the medicines you are taking and how to get them regularly checked.

You may be at risk of a fall if you:

- have problems with walking and/or balance
- are taking medicines that feel confused or unsettled
- have problems with your eyesight
- have a health issue such as diabetes, Parkinson's disease or have had a stroke or a recent operation.

If you do have a fall

Do not try to get up by yourself and do not rely on your friends, family or carer to help you.

Always call for help from staff.

Staff will try to find out what contributed to your fall to reduce the risk of falling again.

Before you leave hospital

Talk to your doctor, nurse or therapy staff about ways to reduce your risk of falling. You may be referred to follow-up services (e.g. a physiotherapist) for ongoing support.

We want your stay to be safe

Falls are a significant cause of harm to older people, and an unfamiliar hospital environment can increase the risk of falls. Here are a few steps you can take to help prevent falls and make your stay in hospital as safe and comfortable as possible.

While in hospital

Staff will:

- keep your surroundings safe
- assess your risk of falling
- provide you with information about preventing falls
- put a care plan in place for you. You or your carer can help by:
 - asking about your risk factors for falling
 - bringing glasses, hearing aids and any equipment you normally use
 - wearing sensible footwear with good support
 - placing the call bell within reach and using it to call for help
 - being careful in wet areas
 - standing up slowly to reduce dizziness
 - using a walking aid if needed
 - calling for staff to help when moving
- and also if you are feeling unwell, dizzy, unsteady or if there are hazards in your way.