

# STEADY ON YOUR FEET

Devon



Falls Prevention Information Pack

# Information & Advice



## Information and Advice

### Falls

The more details you can remember about a fall, the easier it is to pinpoint a cause so think carefully about:

- When it happened – was it related to time of day? Were you doing something specific at the time?
- How it happened – was it a loss of balance? Did you trip on something? Did you feel dizzy? Did you blackout?
- Where it happened – is there a trip hazard you could remove? Have you fallen in this place before? If so, why could this be?

If you are falling it can be helpful to keep a falls diary so you can track your falls over time. This allows for any trends to be identified and find strategies to prevent or reduce your falls.

Often, rather than one specific reason, there may be a number of underlying risk factors which have played a part, many of which can be reduced by following some simple advice.

These issues may include: -

- Memory loss or confusion
- Dizziness
- Vision and hearing problems
- Poor nutrition and hydration
- Medications or poor pain control
- Alcohol consumption
- Bladder and bowel conditions (including incontinence)
- Muscle weakness
- Poor balance
- Foot pain, deformity or numbness
- Badly fitting or unsupportive footwear
- Environmental hazards

Falling can have an impact on your confidence which may then lead to a vicious cycle of reduced activity and a further increase in falls risk.

Taking a pro-active approach, even if you haven't had a fall, will help you take control of the situation and allow you to remain active and independent for longer with an increased quality of life in the long term.

### Other medical conditions and Falls

It is well known that some medical conditions, such as Parkinson's Disease, Multiple Sclerosis and a history of a Stroke can increase your risk of falls. If you are concerned about how your past medical history may be affecting your falls risk, please discuss this with your GP or an appropriate healthcare

professional, such as a specialist nurse who can help you manage your falls risk with your individual needs.

**Useful links on falls and how to prevent them:**

**Saga - Get Up and Go Guide**

**NHS Supporting Older People**

**NHS Falls Prevention**

**Age uk- staying steady links**

**RoSPA Home Safety Videos**

## Blackouts

Blackouts can be difficult to identify, particularly if they are brief, but they should be suspected if you cannot recall the fall and / or have injuries to your face, as this suggests you did not put your hands out to save yourself.

Blackouts are very common and happen more often as we age. Common causes include:

- A drop in blood pressure when changing position (e.g. standing up from a chair)
- Heart disorders
- Anxiety / panic attacks / stress

If you think you may have had a blackout, it is important that you inform your GP so the cause can be investigated.

[More information can be found here](#)

## Dizziness

It can occur for many reasons, e.g:

- A drop in blood pressure when changing position (e.g. standing up from a chair)
- If you feel dizzy when you first stand up:
  - Keep yourself hydrated, you could drink a glass of water whilst sat on the edge of the bed.
  - 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 and don't rush

## Dehydration

- Make sure you drink plenty of fluids during the day (6-8 cups per day)
  - please note this is good general advice unless you have been prescribed diuretics 'water tablets'. These tablets are designed to make you pass more urine, drinking more will negate the effect of the tablets. So if this applies to you, you should only drink normal amounts or, if you have been given a 'fluid restriction' (an upper limit to the amount you can drink per day) please continue to observe that.
- Drink regularly throughout the day
- Reduce caffeine and alcohol intake

## Inner ear disorders / vertigo

- If you feel like the world is moving or spinning, or your dizziness is associated with nausea, vomiting, visual changes or hearing disturbances contact your GP surgery for further advice
- Ensure you have had a hearing assessment recently

## Medications

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

## Medical conditions (e.g. diabetes, COPD)

- Consider whether your condition is well managed and discuss with a health professional if you need further advice

## Anxiety

- Try some relaxation techniques such as mindfulness or deep breathing
- 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.
- Discuss with your GP if severe

## Further information

[TALKWORKS | Mental Health Support for Devon](#)

[NHS information on dizziness](#)

## Medication

It is important to have your medications reviewed regularly by your GP or pharmacist so they can ensure each medicine is still needed and appropriate, keep an eye on any side effects and alter dosages if necessary. This is particularly important as we age as our sensitivity to medicines increase and dosages may need to be adjusted accordingly.

Do not stop taking medications, or take self-purchased medications or herbal remedies without first consulting your GP or pharmacist.

Make sure you take your medications as prescribed by your GP. There may be specific instructions such as taking them at a certain time of day or on an empty stomach etc., that are important to their effectiveness.

Consider filling a dosette box to help organise your medications and/ or using an alarm to prompt you to take them.

Drinking alcohol may increase the risk of drowsiness whilst taking some medication so always check with a pharmacist or GP if this is safe to do

Your pharmacist may also be able to advise you of alternatives if struggling to swallow tablets.

### Pain relief and falls

Pain can affect the way you mobilise, and poor gait pattern increases the risk of falls.

#### **What I can do:**

- Take pain relief as prescribed. Regular pain relief helps you remain active in a safe way. If you do not like taking pain relief regularly, make sure you take some before you are active, for example going out shopping or to an appointment
- Speak to your GP about your pain relief if you are concerned about taking it, or you do not feel it is effective
- Consider alternative forms of non-pharmaceutical pain relief such as heat, ice or TENS machines. They may not cure the pain but may make it more manageable

#### Help from a Pharmacist



## Environment

Often this is because of hazards within the home or difficulty with daily activities such as getting in / out of bed, on / off a chair or toilet, or in / out of the bath may also cause falls.

Falls prevention in and around the home is often described as 'common sense', however, it isn't always easy to recognise the things that can cause trips, slips and falls.

Use our home safety section to help you identify and remove hazards within your home

[View Home Safety Section](#)

## Movement and Exercise

Between the ages of 50 and 70 we lose about 30% of our muscle strength and, as we age, our balance reaction times get slower which makes it harder to stay steady, especially if we are doing something quickly. Without physical activity, it is also difficult to maintain strong bones.

There is strong evidence that strength and balance exercise programmes are effective in preventing falls, regardless of age. Exercise classes designed for older people are particularly beneficial as they aim to improve balance and strength, making it easier to get in and out of chairs, on and off buses and up from and down to the floor.

**[Click here for some strength and balance exercises to get you started](#)**

Generally speaking, physical activity is any movement that results in a small increase in your heart rate and breathing. Exercising is safe and beneficial for the majority of people, but, if you experience chest pain or feel faint while exercising you should stop exercising immediately and contact your doctor. To minimise the risk of adverse effects, if you are new to exercise, begin slowly and gradually build up to the recommended amount:

- Physical activity on most days adding up to 150mins moderate intensity exercise each week (e.g. walking, swimming, cycling)
- Strengthening exercises 2-3 times per week (e.g. gym, carrying heavy bags, yoga)
- Challenging balance activities 2-3 times per week (e.g. tai chi, bowls, dancing)

Something is better than nothing, even if it is just breaking up long periods of sitting with regular walks around the house or doing some exercises in your chair. Please note that chair based exercises, while beneficial for many other things, DO NOT prevent falls – exercises must challenge your balance if they are to be effective. If you are already reasonably active, you still need to ensure your strength, balance and bone health is at its best. Tai Chi and any form of dancing are great activities to help your bones, muscles and balance.

If you need help or advice about the best activities for you, speak to a physiotherapist or appropriately qualified exercise professional.

"Remember – Keeping active is vital. If you feel unsteady and a walking aid helps you feel steady and keep active this it 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.

## Further Information

For further information regarding community exercise opportunities for older people:

**[Active Devon: Active Ageing - Active Devon](#)**

**[Pinpoint Devon: Support services for older adults in Devon](#)**

Evidence Based Strength and Balance Classes

## Vision

You may not notice that your vision is changing but, as we age we become less able to adapt to changes in light and darkness, to tell colours apart and to accurately see depth and distance. This can cause problems with bifocals / varifocals, even if they have been worn for years so if you do wear this kind of lens, take care on steps, stairs and patterned or uneven surfaces.

The older we get, the more common eye conditions such as cataracts, glaucoma and macular degeneration become but, with 70% of visual problems being correctable, it is extremely important to ensure that you have regular eye tests. Remember that eye tests are free if you are 60 or over and many opticians can visit you at home if you are unable to go out and about.

It is important to tell your optician if you are worried about falling or if you have fallen over. They may can take this into consideration when reviewing your treatment plan.

## Further Information

Further information can be found here:

[NHS eye health advice](#)

[Age UK eye health advice](#)

[Find an optician](#)

[Royal National Institute of Blind People](#)

## Memory

This may just be a gradual deterioration associated with ageing but can also be associated with stress, poor sleep, infection, certain medications, dementia and excessive consumption or withdrawal from drugs or alcohol.

If your memory issues are minor, you may find that keeping your brain active with puzzles and games or using visual prompts and lists as reminders can help.

Keep yourself oriented by reading or listening to the news and making a note of the date each day.

If memory problems are severe they can impair judgement, reasoning and insight which can then result in risk taking behaviour which may then lead to falls. The ability to recognise and interpret sight, sound and touch may also be affected which can lead to communication and movement difficulties. If you or your friends and family have noticed a change in your memory or behaviour, it is important that you discuss this with your GP or other health professional.

## Further Information

For further information follow the links below:

[NHS information on memory loss](#)

[AgeUK Advice on Dementia](#)

## Nutrition and Hydration

It is important to speak to your GP if you are losing weight for an unknown reason as it could be a sign of an underlying medical condition.

Poor nutrition can result in a weakened immune system, difficulties absorbing medication, impaired wound healing and a reduction in muscle and bone strength which may then lead to an increase in falls. Even if your weight is normal, if you are eating a limited range of foods, you could still be malnourished.

Good hydration is equally as important as water makes up two thirds of our body and is vital to help digestion and flush out toxins. Being dehydrated can cause headaches, confusion, dizziness, constipation, urine infections, etc. which may all increase the risk of falls. Signs that you are not drinking enough can include feeling thirsty, headaches, tiredness, dry mouth / lips, confusion, dark / smelly urine, constipation.

If you are unsure if you are eating a balanced diet or drinking enough fluid, try keeping a food / drink diary and comparing it to the guidelines below. There are many reasons that your diet may be poor such as small appetite, swallowing difficulties, difficulty sourcing or preparing food, illness and problems with dental health. If you have difficulty shopping or preparing food, speak to family / friends who may be able to help or consider a meal or shopping delivery service. Contact social services if you are having particular difficulties preparing meals and other daily activities as they may be able to help.

Try to eat a varied, balanced diet and maintain good hydration by eating / drinking:

- 2-3 portions of high protein foods every day such as meat, fish, eggs, nuts, beans, pulses, soya, tofu and other meat-free protein foods
- 2-3 portions of dairy foods every day such as cheese, milk and yoghurt or non-dairy alternatives like soya, almond or coconut milk
- 1 serving of starchy food at each meal (e.g. bread, cereals, potatoes, pasta or rice)
- Some fruit and vegetables every day (fresh, frozen, tinned, dried or juiced)
- If you enjoy fish, go for oily fish such as mackerel, salmon, herring, trout, pilchards or sardines as these are rich in omega-3 fatty acids. Aim for 2 portions a week
- At least 6-8 glasses/mugs of fluid every day – keep caffeine intake low as this can worsen dehydration
- If you have diabetes please consult your GP, nurse or dietician before making any changes

## Further information

[NHS Eat Well](#)

[AgeUK Health Eating](#)

[British Dietetics Association - Older Adult food facts | British Dietetic Association \(BDA\)](#)

[Care Direct - Support and advice for older adults living in Devon | Devon County Council](#)

[Find a Dentist: Find a dentist - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

## Bone Health

Osteoporosis is a condition which causes reduced bone density and increases susceptibility to fracture (breaking a bone). It is more common in women due to bone loss occurring more rapidly after menopause. The likelihood of having osteoporosis increases if you:

- Have ever broken a bone following a minor bump or fall (over the age of 50)
- Have a low BMI
- Have a family history of osteoporosis or hip fracture
- Are a current smoker or drink more than 3 units of alcohol per day
- Have taken oral corticosteroids (e.g. Prednisolone) for more than 3 months
- Have a diagnosis of Rheumatoid Arthritis
- Have Type I diabetes, untreated hyperthyroidism, chronic malnutrition/ malabsorption, chronic liver disease
- Have gone through a premature menopause (<45 years) without taking HRT

If you have broken a bone after a minor bump or fall and haven't discussed your bone health with another professional, it is important to see your GP so your bone health can be assessed. Diet and lifestyle changes can help to keep your bones as strong as possible, regardless of whether you have osteoporosis or not:

- 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 can guide you as to which exercises may be suitable for you. Alternatively speak to your physiotherapist
- Ensure your Vitamin D intake is sufficient. We get most of our vitamin D from sunlight and most people in the UK get enough vitamin D by spending 15 minutes in the sun three times a week. It is recommended to take Vit 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)
- if you eat all of the below you will achieve 1000mg calcium:
  - 2 whole grain bread,
  - 2 slices of gouda, edam or emmental cheese,
  - 1 serving of broccoli,
  - 2 glasses of mineral water, and.
  - 1 pot of yoghurt (200 g).

### The Royal Osteoporosis Society



Trimming your toenails using a long handled file after bathing, when they are softer, can make them easier to manage independently. If you struggle or you have foot problems that you cannot manage yourself, a podiatrist or chiropodist can help. This is especially important if you have diabetes.

Try to wear footwear that protects and supports your feet with non-slip soles that are not too thick. Avoid high heels or backless footwear as they are more likely to cause you to trip.

## Further information

[Find a Podiatrist](#)



## Bladder / Bowel

Some bladder and bowel problems can increase the risk of falls:

- Strong urge to urinate
- Urine infections
- Passing urine more than 10 times in 24hrs
- Having to go to the toilet more than twice nightly
- Constipation - having hard bowel movements less than 3 times a week
- Diarrhoea - loose watery faeces that need to be passed urgently
- Difficulty accessing toilet

These issues can be exacerbated by poor hydration and high caffeine and / or alcohol intake. You can help to keep your bladder and bowel healthy by drinking 6 to 8 cups of fluid per day (unless advised otherwise) and minimising any drinks containing caffeine or alcohol.

Eating a balanced diet with plenty of fibre e.g. wholegrain bread, cereals, peas and beans and fruit and veg, can help to ease constipation. If you find it difficult getting to the toilet at night, a commode or urinal may be helpful. Speak to your GP about a continence assessment if you are having on-going issues and require further support.

### Pelvic floor exercises

## Fear of Falling

The more worried you become about falling over, the less likely you are to keep active which, in turn, makes you more likely to fall again. You may find that you are more careful with your walking, start to slow down your pace or you begin to leave the house less often. These are very common behaviours and it may mean you've lost some of your confidence when getting around. It is important to remember that 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. Working through the self-assessment tool on this website is a great start.

Having a falls plan in place can help to reduce anxiety and will reduce the likelihood of being on the floor for a long time. You may want to consider the following as part of your falls plan:

- 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.
- 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 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 are worried about falling when you are alone at home, you might want to get a pendant alarm to enable you to call for help even if you can't reach the telephone.

There are also telecare sensors available such as falls detectors for people who would not be able to press a pendant alarm.

### **Remember**

- If you have had a fall, try not to worry about it too much. There are plenty of things you can do to minimise your risk of it happening again
- 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.
- If your worries are not going away, try talking to someone about it
- Set yourself small goals to build back up to your usual activities – e.g. walk for a short distance first
- Think about all the times you haven't fallen and try to maintain your usual levels of activity

**Complete a self-assessment and develop an action plan**

## Further Resources/Pendant Alarms

East Devon: About Home Safeguard

Exeter: Home Call alarm service

Middevon: Lifeline alarms

North Devon, Care Direct

Talking Therapy, Devon (excluding Plymouth) TALKWORKS | Mental Health Support for Devon  
([dpt.nhs.uk](http://dpt.nhs.uk))

Talking Therapy, Plymouth Plymouth Options | Livewell Southwest

## Sleep and Falls

### What I can do:

- Limit your daytime sleep
- Be as active as you can during the day
- Have a set bedtime routine
- Milky drinks before bedtime may help
- Tea and coffee later in the day are likely to keep you awake. Try switching to decaffeinated versions of your favourite drinks
- Play music you enjoy or that is especially good for relaxation before going to bed
- Try not to worry about the things you cannot change

It is important to sleep in bed whenever possible as it helps to improve circulation, to reduce swelling in limbs, and ensures all muscles in the body are in a relaxed state when lying in bed.

Sleeping pills are a common risk factor for falls, especially if you find yourself falling in the night or in the morning. If you are on regular sleeping pills, you may wish to speak to your GP about this.

Fatigue and boredom can also affect how alert we feel, which can increase falls risk. Keep to a good routine and try to keep your mind active by doing crosswords, reading the paper etc. Avoid sleeping for too long during the day, and pace yourself to manage fatigue.

### Rolling out of bed

If you are rolling out of bed as you are asleep consider;

- Try to sleep more centrally in the bed.
- Ask your GP to review night time sedatives (sleeping tablets) as this could contribute to this.
- Elevate the edge of the mattress

If you are falling or slipping from the bed when you are trying to get in or out, consider:

- Adapting the height of the bed- if it is too low it is easy to get in but hard to get out off.
  - If the bed is too high- it will be hard to get in, and you may 'slide' out. You could remove casters, or invest in a shallower mattress
  - If the bed is too low- it will be hard to stand from. You could raise the bed, a mobility shop or the independent living centre can help advise on this
- If you are struggling to stand from the bed and the height is correct for you, try building in some strengthening exercises into your daily routine (see exercise tab)
- If you are struggling to get in and out of the bed a bed leaver could help. Speak to a mobility shop or the independent living centre. If you have an electronic bed you could try to flatten the knee break on an electronic bed.
- Other factors which may increase your risk of falling are; the sheets are too slippery or the edge of the mattress is too soft.

Bed handles to assist with bed transfer, for this speak to Occupational therapy or other health professionals for advice.

## Further Information

Independent Living Centre: <https://www.independentlivingcentre.org.uk/>

## Mobility Shops

Community Rehabilitation Team:

Axminster: [01297 630435](tel:01297630435)

Crediton: [01363 777561](tel:01363777561)

Exeter Central and East: [01392 465666](tel:01392465666)

Exeter South and West: [01392 908616](tel:01392908616)

Exmouth, Budleigh & Woodbury: [01395 282021](tel:01395282021)

Okehampton: [01837 658029](tel:01837658029)

Seaton Rehab: [01297 626740](tel:01297626740)

Sidmouth: [01395 519909](tel:01395519909)

Tiverton: [01884 235492](tel:01884235492)

North Devon & Torridge: please contact your GP for referral to the rehabilitation team.

## Further Help and Contacts

### 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. They can also support people who have sensory difficulties such as hearing or sight loss. 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.

#### Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service

Contact number: 01392 872200

Website: <https://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.

#### Independent Living Centre

Contact 01392 380181 or [ilc-exeter@devon.gov.uk](mailto:ilc-exeter@devon.gov.uk)

Website: <https://www.independentlivingcentre.org.uk/> Twitter: @ILCDevon Facebook: @DevonILC

A Devon NHS and Devon County Council funded Equipment and technology centre based in Newton Abbot, offering free, impartial equipment and technology advice, information and

assessments. Contact for advice and information or to book an appointment to visit the centre where one of their specialist NHS therapists can assess your needs and demonstrate equipment and technology for daily living and mobility.

### Local Mobility Shops

<https://www.independentlivingcentre.org.uk/local-suppliers/>

### Pinpoint Devon

Website: <https://www.pinpointdevon.co.uk/>

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

### Torbay and South Devon NHS Public Website

Website: [Healthy ageing and frailty - Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust](#)

Healthy ageing and frailty information for a range of support to help you stay healthy and independent throughout life.

### Plymouth Online Directory

Contact Number: [01752 668000](tel:01752 668000)

Website: [Plymouth Online Directory - Plymouth Online Directory](#)

A community-based directory with a focus on health, social and wellbeing services in Plymouth.

### For personal alarm pendant:

**Across Devon: The Independent Living Centre** (details above) can provide advice and information around personal pendant alarms.

Website: <https://www.independentlivingcentre.org.uk/local-suppliers/>

### **East Devon: Home Safeguard Alarm Services.**

Telephone: [0330 678 2381](tel:0330 678 2381) Website: [About Home Safeguard - East Devon](#)

### **Exeter: Home Call Alarms.**

Telephone: [01392 682349](tel:01392682349) Website: [Home Call alarm service - Exeter City Council](#)

**Middevon: Lifeline Alarms.**

Telephone: [01884 255255](tel:01884255255) Website: [Lifeline alarms - MIDDEVN.GOV.UK](http://Lifelinealarms-MIDDEVN.GOV.UK)

**South Devon (Dartmoor National Park, Newton Abbot, Teignmouth and Dawlish):  
Teign Housing**

Telephone: [01626 355135](tel:01626355135) Website: [Lifeline Alarms - Teign Housing](#)

**Plymouth: Plymouth City Council.**

Telephone: [01752 668000](tel:01752668000) Website: [Personal alarms, security systems and keysafes - Plymouth Online Directory](#)

[Or for further assessment if you are struggling to manage around your home](#)

**Contact your Local Community Rehabilitation Team**

Axminster: [01297 630435](tel:01297630435)

Crediton: [01363 777561](tel:01363777561)

Exeter Central and East: [01392 465666](tel:01392465666)

Exeter South and West: [01392 908616](tel:01392908616)

Exmouth, Budleigh & Woodbury: [01395 282021](tel:01395282021)

Honiton, Ottery St Mary and Cranbrook: [01404 540549](tel:01404540549)

Okehampton: [01837 658029](tel:01837658029)

Seaton Rehab: [01297 626740](tel:01297626740)

Sidmouth: [01395 519909](tel:01395519909)

Tiverton: [01884 235492](tel:01884235492)

Torbay and South Devon: Customer Service Centre for Falls, Mobility and Home Assessments  
[01803 219700](tel:01803219700)

North Devon and Torridge: Please contact your GP for referral

Plymouth: Please contact your GP for referral



If you are unsure which team to contact, please contact the one closest to your GP.

Alternatively, you can contact your GP surgery and ask to be referred for an assessment.

## 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:

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

Royal Osteoporosis Society

Contact number: [0808 800 0035](tel:08088000035)

Website: [Royal Osteoporosis Society | Exercise and physical activity for osteoporosis \(theros.org.uk\)](https://www.theros.org.uk/exercise-and-physical-activity-for-osteoporosis)

For information on osteoporosis and suitable exercises

## Other Useful Links

### **RNIB**

Contact number: [0303 123 9999](tel:03031239999)

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.

### **OneSmallStep**

Contact number: [0800 2982654](tel:08002982654) or [01392 908139](tel:01392908139)

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

**One You Plymouth**

Contact Number: 01752 437177

Website: One You Plymouth | Become a healthier you

Providing lifestyle advice for people who live in Plymouth

## Care Homes

Care home residents are three times more likely to fall than older adults living in their own home. There are many factors that contribute to this heightened risk including (but not limited to): Frailty; the presence of long-term conditions; physical inactivity; taking multiple medications; the unfamiliarity of new surroundings. However, in many cases taking the right steps at the right time can actively support an individual and reduce the risk of falls and harm from falls.

The factors that contribute to an individual's risk of falling is unique to them. For this reason, it is important that care homes have a person-centred approach to manage and prevent falls. This helps to improve the overall quality of care for an individual and has a huge impact on a person's level of independence, participation and enjoyment in life.

This page is for information and support for carers and care providers working in the community. You can find information on local services available to you, as well as useful downloadable resources to help prevent falls and manage a fallen resident/patient.

# Home Safety



## Home safety

### Living Room / Lounge

Do you have casters under chairs which makes them likely to slide as you get up?

Casters make furniture easier to move but can cause a problem if they slide back just as you are getting up. Either remove the casters or fit cup shaped carpet savers underneath.

Can you get in and out of your chair safely?

If your chair is too high or too low it may need adjusting to make it easier to get in and out of.

Do you have other chairs in your house which are a better height for you? Get someone to swap them over for you.

Do you have to lean or reach to open windows or curtains because furniture is in the way?

Curtain cords may help to help open and close the curtains without stretching.

Ask someone to help you re-arrange the furniture so that your windows are more accessible

### Fire Safety

- Make sure electrical wires and plugs are maintained and don't overload sockets and if it is not in use SWITCH IT OFF!
- Don't dry clothes close to a heat source – they may catch fire from radiated heat
- If you smoke make sure you put it out, right out in an ashtray and empty ashtrays regularly

## Kitchen

Is there a risk of falling on wet flooring especially near the sink and washing machine?

Non-slip mats, a fitted carpet or carpet tiles should be used. Wet floor areas should be mopped as soon as possible.

Is everything within easy reach without stretching or climbing on chairs/stools etc?

Stretching and reaching above head height can make you feel dizzy and there is a temptation to climb up on chairs to reach something. Things, which are used regularly, should be on the 'easy to reach shelves'.

If steps have to be used are they secure with a handrail and system to keep the legs locked?

Never use a chair or a stool to stand on. Properly designed steps can be used in reasonable safety if you are fit enough. They must be designed with an effective handrail and with an easily applied lock for the legs. If possible ask someone else to help.

Do you struggle to carry items from the kitchen to dining area?

You might benefit from a kitchen trolley. Trolleys are not recommended as a walking aid they are to carry items from one place to another. If you are unsteady on your feet you will need an assessment to see if a trolley is safe for you to use.

## Fire Safety

- Chuck out your chip pan – they are very dangerous and cause thousands of fires each year across the UK
- Stand by your pan – make sure you don't get distracted when cooking if you need to leave the room turn it off
- Don't put metal in the microwave
- Don't wear loose clothing when cooking and keep tea towels away from the hob
- Washers and Dryers can cause fires so only use when in the home and switch off when not in use

## Bedroom

Do you feel safe getting in and out of bed?

Consider if your bedding / clothing is increasing the risk of slipping from the bed. Consider if your mattress is too soft and not providing support, or your bed is too high or too low.

Is there a light that can be turned on and off from the bed?

Fit a pull cord for the main light within reach of the bed. A bedside lamp is an alternative though may be a fire hazard if it is permanently plugged in. A battery powered push light fitted next to the bed is a good solution.

Is there a telephone next to your bed?

It is useful to have a telephone in your bedroom. Ensure your pendant alarm, if you have one, is within reach when you are in bed. *DO NOT leave mobile phones charging overnight – Fire Risk*

## Fire Safety

- Never smoke in bed
- Don't fold electric blanket and check for wear and tear before use – make sure you switch off before bed
- Have a bedtime routine – switch off electricals, close internal doors and make sure your escape route is clear
- Emollient skin products ( for a variety of skin conditions such as psoriasis, eczema, ulcers and bed sores) are safe to use but can leave a flammable residue on clothes or bedding so no naked flames or cigarette.

## Bathroom

Is there a risk of falling on wet vinyl or tiled flooring?

Non-slip mats, a fitted carpet or carpet tiles should be used. Wet floor areas should be mopped as soon as possible.

Can you access the bath and/or shower safely?

Non-slip rubberised mats are readily available. A grab rail may improve your safety / confidence. If you are unable to bathe safely, you may benefit from further assessment.

Getting washed and dried can be very tiring and is hard on your balance, sit on the toilet or a suitable stool when able.

Can you get on and off the toilet safely?

A grab rail may be helpful instead of using a radiator or any other bathroom fittings for support. A handy person would be able to install one.

Is the toilet roll in easy reach, to prevent over stretching?

Avoid rushing, for example make sure you go to toilet in plenty of time

**Do you only have a toilet upstairs?**

If you struggle to get up or down the stairs, consider a commode or other aid downstairs, such as a urine bottle to enable you to get to the toilet in time. Remember you may need some assistance to empty it.



## Stairs and getting about the house

Are staircases and landings well lit?

Routes should be kept illuminated when they are in use and ensure that light switches are easily reached.

Is there a two way light switch present (e.g. a switch at both the top and bottom of stairs)?

Have an electrician fit a two way lightswitch. Consider the local council 'handy person scheme'.

Do you feel stable when going up and down the stairs?

It is essential to have a handrail, even on small flights of stairs. Additional ones can be fitted by the local handyperson scheme. Consider minimising journeys up and down the stairs.

When you walk through a room, do you have to walk around furniture?

Consider moving things so that your path is clear. Ask someone to help if needed and always use your walking aid as advised.

Do you hold onto the furniture when you walk around your house?

If you feel unsteady when you are walking, you might find yourself holding onto furniture to help you feel steadier. This can be dangerous as it can cause you to stoop and overreach.

If you feel unsteady and a walking aid helps you feel steady and keep active this it 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 which walking aid would meet your needs a mobility shop or the community rehabilitation can help advise on this.

Are there papers, magazines, books, shoes, boxes, blankets, towels, or other objects on the floor?

Pick up things that are on the floor and always keep objects off the floor. A 'helping hand' may reduce stooping / overreaching.

Do you have to walk over or around cords or wires (e.g. cords and wires from lamps, extension cords or telephone cords)?

Coil or tape cords and wires next to the wall so they are not a tripping hazard. If possible have an electrician put in another socket. Consider a fire home safety check from the local fire brigade who can provide advice and supply / fit smoke alarms if required.

Do you have a letterbox cage to avoid stooping to pick up your letters?

These are quite easy to fit, and apart from saving you from stooping, will also stop papers being spread across the floor just inside the doorway which could make you slip. (Available at DIY stores and handy person can fit)

Do you have loose rugs or runners on the floor?

Remove the rugs and runners or use non slip matting beneath the rugs to prevent them from slipping.

If you fall do you have a system for calling assistance?

A personal alarm pendant is a good way of doing this, and there are a number of schemes available - see contact details

Are the carpets in good condition and not frayed?

Worn carpets are a major cause of serious falls and should be replaced or secured

## Fire Safety

- Make sure you have a working smoke alarm on each level of your home and test it regularly. Local fire services or handy man service can support with this. Assistive technology services can support with specialised alarms for those with sensory impairment

## Garden and getting in and out of the house

Are paths clear of leaves and overgrown plants?

Keeping your garden tidy and free of obstacles will make it safer

Are your paving stones free of moss and algae?

Moss and algae can become slippery when wet; prune over hanging plants and branches to improve light and air circulation. You can buy products to remove algae or ask someone to remove it with a pressure washer

Do you have any uneven or broken paving slabs?

Ask someone to replace or straighten them up

Are your flower/vegetable beds at ground level (rather than in containers or raised beds)?

Try not to spend too long in one position and take care when standing up from a bent over position

Try to alternate activities between seated ones and standing ones

Make sure you take breaks to avoid becoming over tired

Consider container gardening or raised beds

Do you have high step(s) to get in and out of the property?

You may benefit from an additional step and / or grab rails

**Remember to use your walking aid (if you use one) outdoors as well. Wheeled walking frames aren't recommended for use outside, four wheeled walkers may be a suitable alternative. Speak to the independant living centre, a mobility shop or your physiotherapist if you are unsure.**

## Fire Safety

- Store wheelie bins and rubbish securely away from property and bring bins back in as soon as possible after rubbish collection

## Sensory Support

Do you have adequate lighting in your home?

Ensure that you have the correct level of lighting in your home. If you need brighter lighting, LED bulbs are brighter and cost less to use

Are the lighting levels in your home consistent?

It is safest to have similar lighting in a room. Add lighting to dark areas and you can hang lightweight curtains or shades to reduce glare.

Is the path from your bed to the bathroom dark?

Put in a night light so that you can see where you are walking. Night lights are low energy lights which plug into a mains socket. A dusk to dawn light will switch on and off automatically. You could also consider a sensor light.

Do you have regular eye checks?

Have your eyes checked by an optician at least once a year and update your glasses. Opticians can visit you at home if you are unable to get out.

### Fire Alarms

Smoke alarms can be interlinked so you get warning wherever you are in your house. Vibrating-pad alarms are available for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, as well as monitored alarm systems that are linked to care assistance.

## Fire Safety

Do you have working smoke alarms in the correct positions in your home and are you aware of the fire risks within your home?

Consider a Fire Home Safety Check from the local Fire & Rescue Service. Devon and Somerset Fire & Rescue Service will visit your home, provide safety advice, make any recommendations and fit and test smoke alarms.

This checklist has been designed to help you identify hazards and reduce the risks that can contribute to you falling in your own home.

**Click on the rooms and you will be provided with a series of questions and tips to help you to identify hazards and improve the safety in your home**

# Staying Active



## Exercise

### Mid, West, East and Exeter Evidence Based Strength and Balance Classes

Evidence based strength and balance classes, which have been shown to reduce your risk of falling are being rolled out into the community. These will be tailored to your needs and include assessments so you can see the improvements you've made. The classes are free for at least 6 weeks.

If you have fallen over, have poor balance or are worried about falling these classes have been designed for you.

You need to be able to;

- Walk with no physical assistance, but can use a walking aid
- Get up from a low-ish chair/toilet without assistance, its okay if you find this difficult.
- Follow instructions

**You can self refer to these classes**, so you do not need a healthcare referral. The instructor will check that the classes are suitable for you with an assessment. The instructors work closely with the community rehabilitation teams and will discuss the best option for you if their class isn't appropriate. The classes take people throughout the year.

**To find out more about a local class, alternative classes or self-refer, contact the centre below:**

#### **Budleigh Salterton**

Date: Mondays

Location: Seachange Budleigh Hub, East Budleigh Road, Budleigh Salterton EX9 6HF

Contact Number: 01395 446896

#### **Crediton**

Day: Wednesdays

Location: Arts Centre, Crediton, 32C, East Street, Crediton EX17 3AX

Contact Number: 01647 440775

### **Cullompton**

Date: Thursdays

Location of Class: Culm Valley Sports Centre, Meadow Lane, Cullompton, EX15 1LL

Contact Number: 01884 234320

### **Exeter**

Date: Wednesdays

Riverside Leisure Centre, Cowick Street, Exeter EX4 1AF

Contact Number: 07849 308278

### **Exminster**

Dates: Mondays

Location: Westbank Healthy Living Centre, Farmhouse Rise, Exeter EX6 8AT.

Contact Number: 01392 824752

### **Exmouth**

Date: Mondays

Location: Exmouth Leisure Centre. The Royal Avenue, Exmouth EX8 1EN

Contact Number: 01395 266381 or complete the self referral form here <https://form.jotform.com/222633413297354>

### **Honiton**

Date: Thursdays

Location: Honiton Leisure Centre, School Lane, Honiton EX14 1QW:

Contact Number: 01404 42325 or complete the self referral form here <https://form.jotform.com/222633413297354>



**Moretonhampstead**

Day: Wednesdays

Location: Moretonhampstead Parish Council, Green Hill, Fore St, Moretonhampstead, Newton Abbot  
TQ13 8LL

Contact Number: 01647 440775

**Okehampton**

Day: Wednesdays

Location: Parklands Leisure Centre, Simmons Park, Okehampton EX20 1EP

Contact Number: 01647 440775

**Seaton**

Date: Mondays

Location: Seaton Community Hospital, Valley View Close, Seaton, EX12 2UU

Contact Number: 01297 35235 or complete the self referral form  
here <https://form.jotform.com/222633413297354>

**Tiverton**

Date: Wednesdays

Location: Exe Valley Leisure Centre, Bolham Road, Tiverton

Contact Number: 01884 234900

## North Devon Evidence Based Strength and Balance Classes

Evidence based strength and balance classes, which have been shown to reduce your risk of falling are being rolled out into the community. The programme is aimed at those aged 65 and over who are deemed to be at heightened risk of falling, and is delivered over 24 weeks. These will be tailored to your needs and include assessments so you can see the improvements you've made.

After each session there will be light refreshments and time to chat with others in the group.

The programme also aims to connect people with local activities to maintain their new found fitness/strength.

**Sessions will be free of charge for participants**, and assistance with transport is available for people who are unable to get themselves to the venues. Sessions will take place in Barnstaple, Ilfracombe, Braunton, South Molton, Torrington, Bideford and Holsworthy.

### **You must be: -**

- Over 65
- At risk of falls, have a fear of falling or have fallen in the previous year.
- Able to follow instructions
- Able to walk independently indoors and outdoors (with or without a walking aid and without help from another person)
- Able to get up from a dining room type chair (it is ok to find this difficult)
- Prepared to attend weekly for 24 weeks and complete prescribed home exercises between sessions. (we accept there may be the occasional holiday, illness and medical appointments).

There are certain medical and health conditions that may mean that the programme isn't suitable for you. However, we will talk to you to identify if any apply once we receive a completed referral form from you.

### **How to apply: -**

The application process is simple. Health professionals can apply on behalf of their clients. Individuals can also apply direct. If you have any questions please call the Vista Wellbeing Team on 07900 041258 or by clicking the link and completing the online form: <https://forms.gle/tEvLU8ypF2KvHPyG6>

**To find your nearest class, please see the below:**

### **Barnstaple**

Date: Wednesdays 10:30am - 12 noon

Location: Holy Trinity Church, Barbican Terrace, Barnstaple, EX32 9HQ

### **Braunton**

Day: Mondays 10:30am - 12 noon

Location: Chaloners Road, Braunton, EX33 2EA

### **Bideford**

Date: Mondays 13:30 - 15:00

Location: The Pollyfield Community Centre, 2 Avon Road, East-the-Water, Bideford, EX39 4BL

### **Holsworthy**

Date: Starting October 2023 - Fridays 13:30 - 15:00

Location: Memorial Hall, Manor Car Park, North Road, Holsworthy, EX22 6DJ

### **Ilfracombe**

Dates: Mondays 14:00 - 15:30

Location: Slade Valley Road, Ilfracombe, EX34 8LE

### **South Molton**

Date: Mondays 13:00 - 14:30

Location: Mill Street, South Molton, EX36 4AS

### **Torrington**

Date: Fridays 10:00am - 12 noon

Location: Castle Hill, South Street Car Park, Torrington

## Torbay and South Devon Evidence Based Strength and Balance Classes

Evidence based strength and balance classes which have been shown to reduce your risk of falling over are available to you in the community. These will be tailored to your needs and include assessments so you can see the improvements you've made.

Monday: Paignton, Bovey Tracy and Totnes

Tuesday: Newton Abbot, Dawlish and Teignmouth

Wednesday: Paignton and Brixham

Thursday: Torquay

To self-refer or find out more about these classes please call the Healthy Lifestyles team on 0300 456 1006

Keeping physically active has many benefits. For older people in particular, it has been shown to reduce the rate of falls, reduce the risk of fractures (broken bones), increase confidence and increase overall quality of life.

Aim to do some form of daily physical activity for example Gardening, Walking or specific exercises, building up gradually to 2.5hrs of moderate intensity activity every week.

To prevent falls, exercises and activities must challenge your balance, therefore need to take place in standing, with strengthening exercises to support this. The aim should therefore be, within your daily activity Strength and Balance related exercises 2-3 times a week for 30 minutes.

If you are already reasonably active, you still need to ensure your strength, balance and bone health is at its best. Postural Stability Strength and Balance classes, Tai Chi, and dancing, etc. are all great activities to help with balance, fitness and wellbeing. Aim to choose something you enjoy, this will help you stick to it in the long term.

Joining an exercise class has the added benefit of increasing your social contact and can help to motivate you to continue.

If you are less active, or not active at all, remember that something is better than nothing, even if it is just breaking up long periods of sitting with regular walks around the house or doing some exercises in your chair. Please note that chair based exercises, while beneficial for many other things, DO NOT prevent falls.

It may be beneficial to attend an exercise class specifically designed for older people, which can be provided locally ([click here](#) for details), or if you are not ready for a class, review the exercises on the Steady on your feet website for some ideas. Alternatively contact your social prescriber at the GP surgery, the community rehabilitation team or other qualified exercises instructors on ideas how to start some falls prevention exercises.

### **Before exercising:**

- Ensure that you have something to hold onto that is sturdy and stable (a kitchen worktop is ideal).
- Wear supportive footwear
- Have a glass of water to hand
- Begin with activities that you can do comfortably. Start slowly and build up gradually
- Speak to your GP or appropriate health professional, if you have a heart condition, or other medical condition that makes exercising difficult

### **While exercising**

- If you experience chest pain, dizziness or severe shortness of breath, stop immediately and contact your GP (or call an ambulance if you feel very unwell and your symptoms do not go away when you stop exercising)
- If you experience joint or muscle pain, stop, check your technique and position and start again. If you continue to experience pain, you may need some further guidance from a physiotherapist or appropriately qualified exercise instructor
- Remember that feeling your muscles working or slight muscle soreness the next day after exercise is normal and shows that the exercises are working
- Check your posture regularly and ensure that you are standing upright throughout
- Do not hold your breath while you exercise

### **After exercising**

- Have a glass of water and a rest, you've earned it!
- Fill in your exercise diary and make a note of any issues or achievements. This will help you to monitor your progress and make sure you are exercising frequently
- Plan your next exercise session – aim to complete these strength and balance 3 times a week. If you plan it, you are more likely to do it.

Useful links 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:

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

[View our Evidence Based Strength and Balance Classes](#)

**STEADY ON  
YOUR FEET**

[www.steadyonyourfeet.org](http://www.steadyonyourfeet.org)