



STEADY ON YOUR FEET

Beat falls, trips
and slips



Don't
stop doing
the things
you love

Hello

Do you want to stay steady on your feet?
Of course you do. We can help.

We are all at risk of falling, tripping or slipping over. Even if we feel healthy, our risk of falling increases as we get older. Each year one in three people over the age of 65 falls and about half of the people aged 80 or over fall at least once each year.



Falling can make you feel anxious. You are more likely to break a bone if you have, or are at risk of, osteoporosis.

If you are worried about falling, talk to us or your GP. It doesn't have to affect your life, your independence or stop you from doing the things you love.

The good news is that most falls can be prevented, it isn't part of getting older. We hope this information helps you to take action to prevent a fall.



Osteoporosis

is a condition where bones become fragile and can break easily. There are usually no symptoms, apart from breaking a bone if you fall.

Why would I fall over?

There are many reasons why people fall over. We have listed some of the most common below. If you have already fallen over, you are more likely to fall over again, so be extra careful.

1. Blood pressure

can sometimes drop when you stand up, turn around, bend down or are walking, making you feel faint and dizzy.

2. Difficulty walking,

balance, sitting down and getting up, turning over or transferring.

3. Medications,

particularly those for arthritis, stroke, Parkinson's, diabetes, high blood pressure, depressions, sleeping problems and heart conditions can all increase the risk of falling. Taking four or more medications can also increase the risk, regardless of what they are.

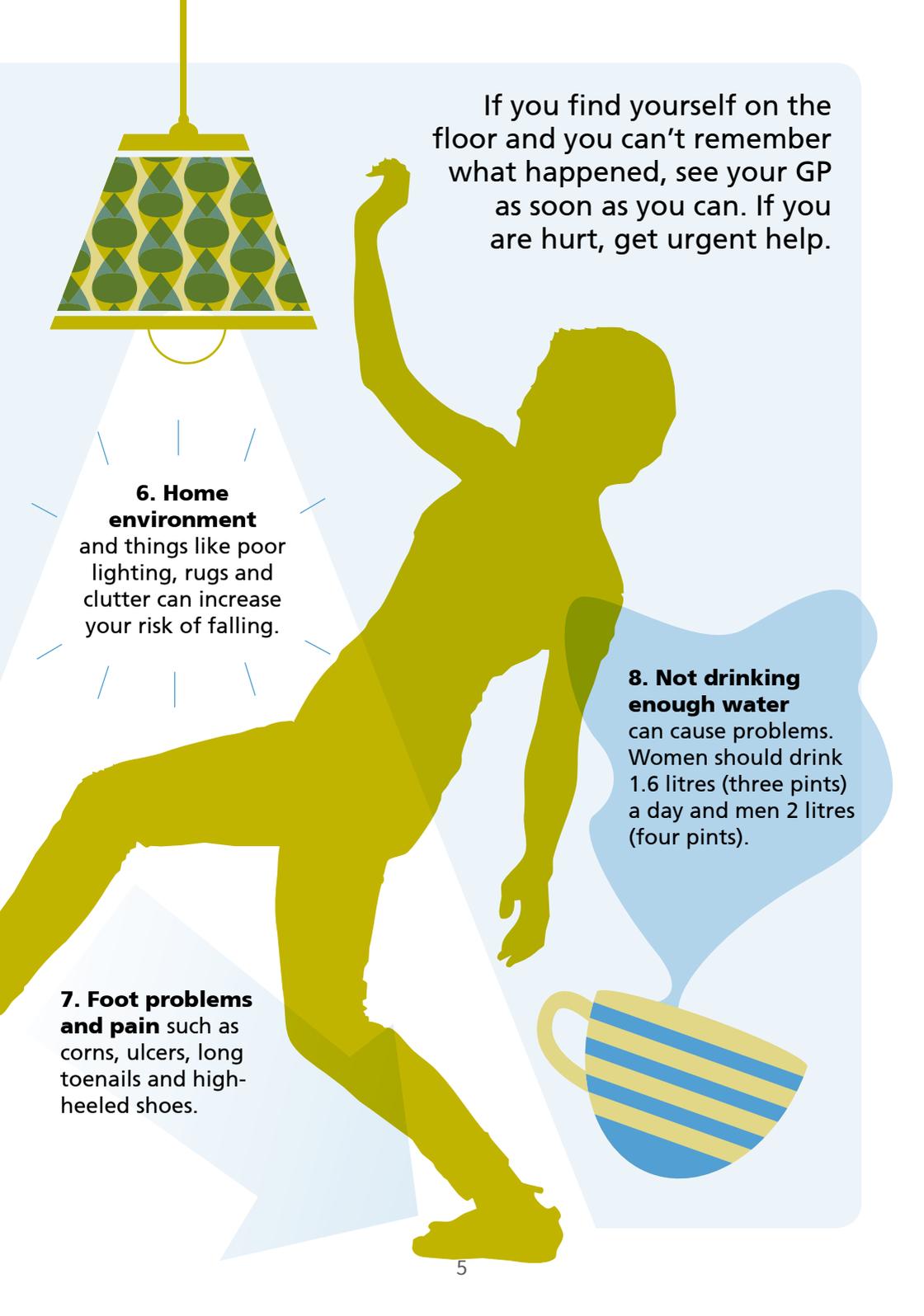
4. Poor eye sight

and/or **hearing** so make sure you have regular tests and use your glasses and/or hearing aid.

5. Long-term conditions and reduced sensation in your feet

can contribute to falling.



A stylized illustration of a person in a blue silhouette falling. The person is leaning forward with one arm raised and legs splayed. A yellow lampshade hangs from the top left, casting a light on the person. A blue speech bubble is on the right, and a striped cup is at the bottom right. The background is light blue with white geometric shapes.

If you find yourself on the floor and you can't remember what happened, see your GP as soon as you can. If you are hurt, get urgent help.

6. Home environment

and things like poor lighting, rugs and clutter can increase your risk of falling.

8. Not drinking enough water

can cause problems. Women should drink 1.6 litres (three pints) a day and men 2 litres (four pints).

7. Foot problems and pain

such as corns, ulcers, long toenails and high-heeled shoes.

What can I change or do to help?

Firstly, if you have already fallen it's important to tell your GP and/or your nurse or therapist, if you are already seeing one. There is no need to be embarrassed, we are here to help.

Wear the right clothes and shoes...

Wear sensible, comfortable shoes with a low heel. They should fit comfortably around the heel, have room for your toes to wiggle, a thin sole and good grip. Laces, Velcro or shoes with a buckle are good.

When you walk, make sure you pick your feet up. Don't shuffle as although this might make you feel safer, it actually increases your risk of falling.

Try not to wear clothes that drag on the floor, such as long trousers, skirts or nightdresses, which may cause you to trip.



Get your eyes and hearing checked...

Poor eyesight and hearing doesn't have to be 'part of getting older'. Make sure you have regular eye and hearing tests. It's always good to check for things like glaucoma and cataracts. If you need glasses or a hearing aid make sure you wear them and keep them clean and in good working order. Take extra care if you wear bifocals.

Don't rush...

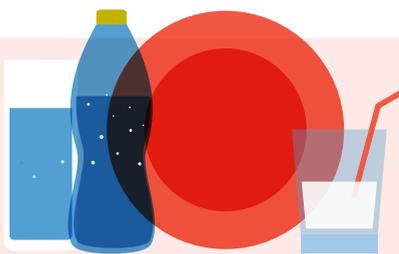
Never rush for the toilet, bus or to get to the front of a queue! Lots of people fall during the night because they are in a hurry to get to the bathroom... in the dark.

If you are worried about incontinence, speak to your GP or contact our Continence Service. The team sees and talks to people with incontinence everyday so there is no need to be worried or embarrassed.



Have a medication review...

Book an appointment with your GP or pharmacist for your annual medication review or if you have started taking a new medication. Make that call sooner if you have any concerns, are taking high doses or multiple medications. Also speak to your GP if you are having side effects that may increase your risk of falling, such as dizziness or feeling tired.



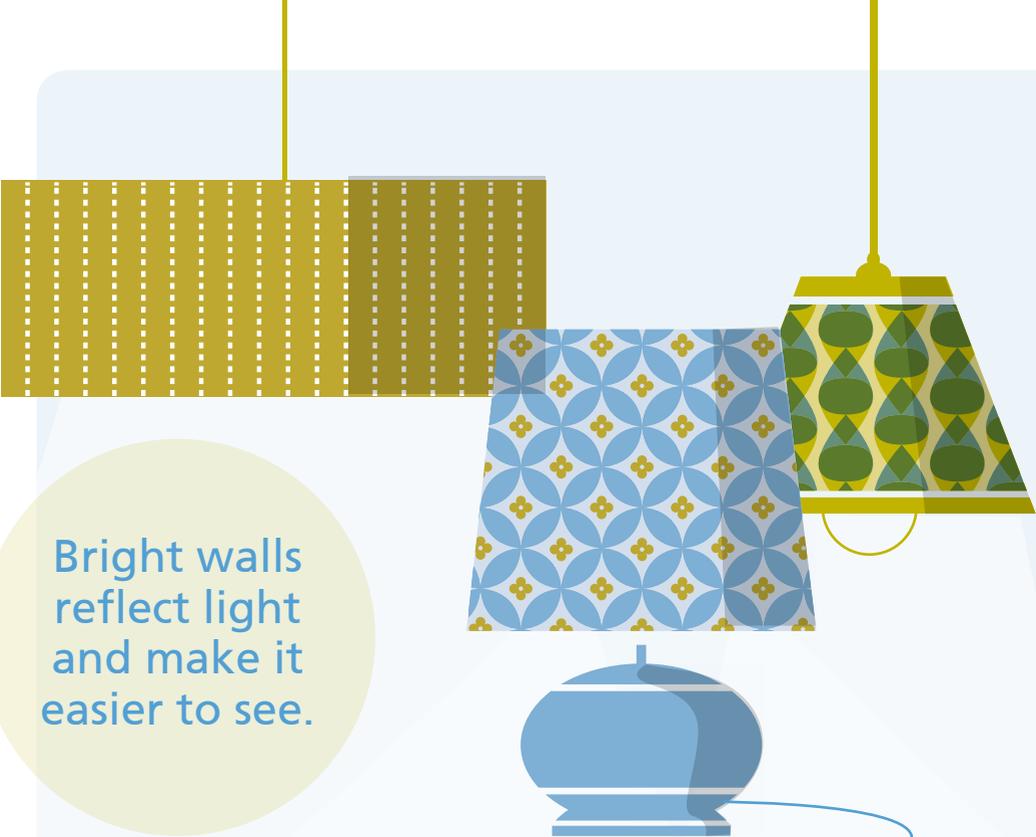
Eat and drink enough...

Making sure you get the right nutrients is really important. Eat regularly and avoid long periods without food, especially if you have another health condition. If you don't feel hungry try eating little and often. Vitamin D and calcium rich food may help if you are at risk of osteoporosis.

Make sure you drink enough and have a good variety of food in your diet, including fruit and vegetables. Women should drink 1.6 litres (three pints) of fluid a day and men 2 litres (four pints).

Alcohol can make anyone unsteady but especially as we get older. It interacts with medication you may be taking, so be extra careful if you have had a drink and don't have more than the recommended amount.

Speak to your GP if you are concerned.



Bright walls reflect light and make it easier to see.

Changes at home

Gets those lights on...

Keep stairs and living areas well lit. Use a long-life bulb with a high wattage; check the fitting first to see what's recommended.

Remember that long-life bulbs or energy saving bulbs tend to take a while to get to full brightness, so turn these on early if you can.

If you get up during the night always put a light on and if you need your glasses, keep them on your bedside table. If you get up frequently, consider leaving the hall or landing light on during the night or keep a good torch by the bed.

Have a tidy up and a de-clutter...

Keep your floor clear of clutter and try not to keep items on the floor in the hallway. Check that carpets are secure, with door bars to adjoining rooms. Ask someone to help if carpets need re-fitting.

If you have rugs, make sure they have a good non-slip underlay so you don't trip on the edges. Consider getting rid of rugs and mats that aren't necessary.

Keep cables tidy and make sure they are not trailing across the floor.

Be safe on the stairs...

Never leave things on the stairs as you may trip on them.

Make sure the hallway, stairs and landing are well lit and consider getting a handrail fitted if you don't have one. Take it steady, especially coming down the stairs.

If you wear bifocal glasses, take extra care. People who wear these tend to fall more often on the stairs than those who don't.

Going to the bathroom...

Be careful not to slip on the floor when getting in and out of the shower or bath. A raised toilet seat or rails may also help if you are unsteady when getting up. Talk to your GP or occupational therapist about this.

If the floor gets wet, wipe it up straightaway so you don't forget and slip later.

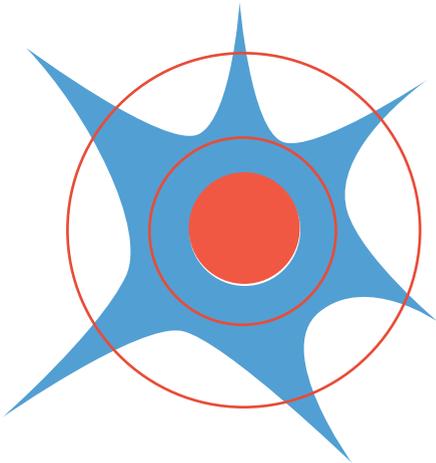
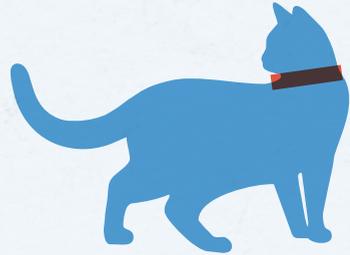


Don't rush to answer the phone or door. If it's important they will wait or call back. If you haven't got one already, set up an answer phone or get a cordless phone.

Having a second phone somewhere else in the house can also be helpful – lots of second units don't need to be plugged into a phone socket nowadays. Also consider getting a mobile phone for emergencies.

Pets...

People often say they trip over their pets. Make sure their beds and toys are tidy and consider getting a bright collar and/or bell so you can see and hear them. If you are worried about walking or caring for your dog consider using a local petcare and/or walking service.



In an emergency...

Think about having a personal alarm system fitted. You can wear a wrist band or pendant with a button you push in an emergency. If you have one, make sure you wear it and check it monthly.

Also think about getting a key safe installed so someone can get in if you need help. If you aren't sure who to contact, our Customer Care Team can help – contact details are on the back of this booklet.

Outside your home...

Make sure that steps, paths and driveways are clear from clutter, rubbish, moss and leaves, which can be extremely slippery. Also check for damage, such as loose stones or cracks in paths, which could cause you to trip.

Keep front and back doors and your garage well lit. Rails may help you.

If you need to carry out any repairs to your home, your local council may be able to recommend reputable companies as part of their schemes. There may be a charge.



Keep moving and stay steady



Move...

We recommend 150 minutes of activity or exercise each week. You could try walking, gardening or housework. You don't have to do it all in one go, try small amounts of time first. Don't sit still for long periods.

...pace yourself!

Leave the house in plenty of time and plan your route. If you are walking, use a familiar route so you know the road and path layout. If you are getting the bus, take your time getting on and off and use the handrails. The bus driver won't mind waiting. If you are driving, take care getting in and out of the car and make sure you have plenty of room to open the door.

When you are out, take your time and be aware of potential hazards, such as uneven surfaces. Steady yourself if you need to or consider using a walking aid. Don't worry about what other people think. Watch out for slippery floors – outside or inside shops – and steps.

Keep your personal belongings, such as money or keys, near so you don't have to look for them in your bag.

Shopping

If you are going shopping take a suitable bag or trolley with you. Carrying lots of bags can obstruct your view of the path below and ahead, making you more likely to trip or slip.



Don't be embarrassed to use a walking aid.



Walking aids

Don't be embarrassed to use a walking aid. Make sure you check if it is suitable for use outside and ask for an assessment if needed.

Exercise

Simple exercises can help with balance and build muscle strength. Your therapist will be able to tell you what exercises are best and how often you should do them.

This may include physiotherapy or group exercises.

My exercises...

If your therapist has recommended exercises, keep a note of them here.

What do I do if I fall?

If you fall, don't try to get up immediately. Take a minute or two to stay still, calm down and check for injuries.

If you are worried about falling at home, place cushions, blankets and water around at floor level so you can reach them if you do fall. Make sure you will not trip on them. It might also give you peace of mind to carry a mobile or your cordless phone in your pocket while at home.

If you haven't already, consider getting a personal alarm installed. This means you can press a button if you fall and someone will come to check on you.

If you cannot get up, call for help...

Use your personal alarm, bang on the wall, call for help or crawl to the phone if you can.

If you have to wait for help try to:

- crawl to a soft surface and use a jumper or cushion as a pillow
- keep warm and use clothing or a tablecloth as a blanket
- change position by rolling so you don't get stiff, go numb or get a pressure sore
- roll away from wet areas if you have gone to the toilet.

Once help has arrived, always tell your GP what's happened and/or get medical help if you are injured.

My actions



To reduce my risk of falling I need to...

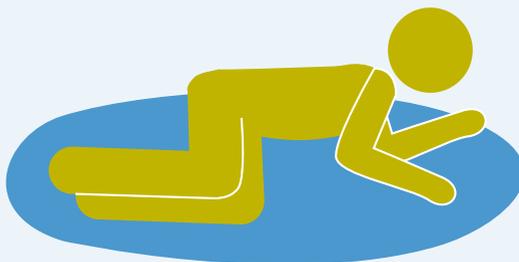
- get my blood pressure checked
- book a medication review
- talk about dizziness
- book an eye and hearing test
- charge my mobile phone
- drink more
- have a de-clutter at home
- think about getting a personal alarm and grab rails fitted
- start moving more
- check my clothes and footwear are suitable
- talk about how I feel
-
-
-
-

Your step by step guide to get up safely...if you can.

Don't attempt if you are unsure. Call for help.

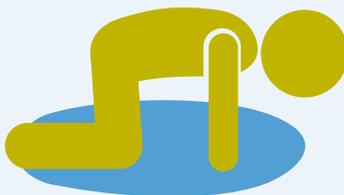
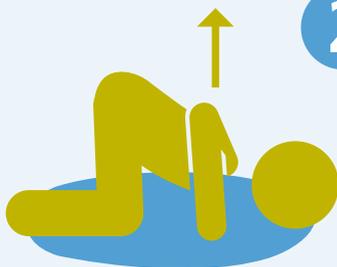
1

Roll on to your side and push up on to your elbows.



2

Push yourself onto all fours.



3

Crawl to a chair, table or bed and hold on to it to steady yourself.



4

Put the foot of your strongest leg flat on the floor.



5

Lean forward and use your strongest leg and arms to push yourself up to stand. Keep holding on to steady yourself.



6

Sit down for a while and rest.



7

Tell your GP what's happened and/or get medical help if you are injured.

Who can help me?

Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust services

Customer Care

Phone: 0300 123 1807

Text: 07943 091958

Email: kcht.ct@nhs.net

Continence Service

Phone: 0300 790 0310

Monday to Friday,

7.30am to 4.30pm.

Falls support

Speak to your healthcare professional about other services we provide that may be able to help you.

You may also find other services that could help at www.kentcht.nhs.uk

Personal alarm

There are lots of companies that can install these alarms. There is usually a cost involved, so we recommend looking at a couple of options.

More information is available from Kent County Council or our Customer Care Team.

Kent County Council, Social Services

Able to advise and maybe help with adaptations to your home, including personal alarms and key safes.

Phone: 03000 41 61 61

Text relay: 18001 03000 41 61 61

Email: social.services@kent.gov.uk

Web: www.kent.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/care-and-support/care-and-support-at-home/equipment-and-changes-to-your-home

Our Customer Care Team or your GP can tell you about the services in your area that you might need. Don't be worried to contact them.



Age UK

Phone: 0800 169 2081
Web: www.ageuk.org.uk

Fire Service

Free safety advice and checks,
including smoke alarms.
Phone: 0800 923 7000
Web: www.kent.fire-uk.org
Email: home@kent.fire-uk.org

National Osteoporosis Society

Phone: 0808 800 0035
Web: www.nos.org.uk

Hi Kent

**Registered charity
for deaf and hard of
hearing people.**

Maidstone: 01622 691151
Canterbury: 01227 760046
Text: 07795 951466

Kent Association for the Blind (KAB)

East Kent

Phone: 01227 763366
Email:
rehab.canterbury@kab.org.uk

West Kent

Phone: 01622 691357
Email: enquiry@kab.org.uk

Medway

Phone: 01634 332929
Email: rehab.medway@kab.org.uk

My contacts

My GP

My nurse

My podiatrist (feet)

My physiotherapist (exercises)

My occupational therapist
(home environment and exercises)

i care...
your gift, our promise.
Registered charity no. 1139134

...about helping the NHS
go above and beyond.

Visit www.kentcht.nhs.uk/icare



donate
today

Customer Care Team

If you have a query about our health services, or would like to comment, compliment or complain about Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust, you can contact the Customer Care Team.

Phone: 0300 123 1807 lines open 8am to 5pm Monday to Friday. Please ask if you would like the team to call you back.

Email: kcht.cct@nhs.net

Text: 07899 903499

Address:

Customer Care Team,
Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust,
Unit J, Concept Court, Shearway Business Park,
Folkestone, Kent CT19 4RJ

If you need communication support, an interpreter or this information in another language, audio, Braille, Easy Read or large print, please ask a member of staff. You will be asked for your agreement to treatment and, if necessary, your permission to share your personal information.

You can give us feedback about our services at www.kentcht.nhs.uk

Leaflet code: 00189

Published: November 2016

Expires: November 2019