

# STEADY ON YOUR FEET

South Tees



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 go 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?

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:

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

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.

## 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, 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)
- 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
- Discuss with your GP if severe

### NHS information on dizziness

## Medication

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

Make sure you are taking 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 the effectiveness. Check with your pharmacist if you plan on drinking alcohol or taking over the counter medication as these can have an effect on other medications you are taking.

### 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.

Use our [home safety section](#) to help you identify and remove hazards within your home

[View Home Safety](#)

## 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.

For further information regarding community exercise opportunities for older people:

[Middlesbrough](#)

[Redcar & Cleveland](#)



## 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.

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. 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.

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](#)

## 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)

### 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.

For further information:

[What is Podiatry](#)

[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 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, 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. 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.

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
- Make sure there are blankets in each room so that you can 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 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**

## Dementia and Nutrition

This page provides an overview of some common issues related to food and hydration faced by people with dementia, as well as practical tips for caregivers to help ensure proper nutrition. For a comprehensive guide, please download the full leaflet below.

The [Dementia Care: A Practical Guide to Eating and Drinking leaflet](#) offers detailed advice on managing the eating and drinking difficulties that individuals with dementia may encounter. It covers topics such as changes in appetite, taste preferences, and the physical challenges of preparing and consuming food.

Practical tips include ways to improve the mealtime environment, adapt food consistency, manage purposeful walking, and offer high-energy and protein-rich snacks. The leaflet also provides guidance on dealing with specific issues like constipation, dehydration, and overeating.

Additionally, it offers advice on maintaining oral care, promoting independence at mealtimes, and supporting nutrition when admitted to the hospital.

Download the full leaflet [here](#) for more in-depth information and personalized care strategies.

[Download Dementia Care Leaflet \(PDF\)](#)



# Home Safety



## Home safety

### Living Room / Lounge

Your living room is usually where you spend most of your day. That's why it's essential to make sure it's a safe space to move around freely. Our guidance helps prevent falls and ensure your comfort.

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?

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

Your kitchen can be a bustling area, but it's crucial to maintain safety to minimise your risk of falling. Our easy-to-follow advice helps you identify hazards and enhance safety in the 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

Your bedroom should be a sanctuary. But it's also a place where the risk of falling increases. By making small changes, you can create a safer and more comfortable environment, while reducing risk.

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.
- If a member of your household uses oxygen Cleveland Fire Brigade can provide specialist advice on fire safety call 01429 874063

## Bathroom

Your bathroom can be one of the most high-risk places for potential slips and falls. But by addressing safety measures, you can minimise the risk of falls and ensure a secure and comfortable bathroom experience.

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.

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.

## Fire Safety

- Have an escape plan in case of fire, make sure exit routes are not blocked and keys are to hand – if people in the home need assistance to exit then make sure this is considered – call Cleveland Fire Brigade for advice 01429 874063

## Stairs and getting about the house

Safely navigating your way around your home is essential for preventing falls. With our assistance, you can identify and address hazards, enhancing falls safety and quality of life inside the home.

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 instructed.

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 the handy person scheme 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 – for support contact Cleveland Fire Brigade on 01429 874063 for a Safer Homes visit, we can also provide specialist alarms for sensory loss

## Garden and getting in and out of the house

Navigating the outdoor areas around your home, including paths, steps and the garden, requires attention to safety.

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

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.**

## 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

Navigating a home safely is essential for everyone, especially for those with sensory impairments.

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 fluorescent 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

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 Safety

Ensuring fire safety in your home is crucial, not only for preventing fires but also for reducing the risk of falls. These key considerations and tips will create a safer home environment.

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 Brigade. Cleveland Fire Brigade 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 below and you will be provided with a series of questions and tips to help you identify hazards and improve the safety in your home

# Staying Active



## Staying Active

### Introduction

Aim to do some form of daily physical activity, building up gradually to 2.5hrs of moderate intensity exercise every week. To reduce falls risk, whichever physical activity you choose should include strengthening, balance and flexibility work 2-3 times per week.

If you are already reasonably active, you still need to ensure your strength, balance and bone health is at its best. Tai Chi, dancing, bowls, etc. are all great activities to help with this and choosing something you enjoy 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 – exercises must challenge your balance to do this. It would be beneficial to attend an exercise class specifically designed for older people and even better if you can find one specifically aimed at falls prevention (sometimes known as postural stability or Otago). Contact your local leisure centre for more information.

If you don't feel ready to join an exercise class, or want some simple exercise that you can do at home, please click on the links below.

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

### Safety checks

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 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.

## Guidelines and Advice

From recommendations for daily activity to strength, balance, and flexibility exercises, this page provides valuable insights to help you stay physically active and prevent falls.

Before diving into an exercise routine, we've included important preparations to ensure your safety and well-being. Explore these expert recommendations and take your first steps towards healthy, independent and safer ageing.

### Physical Activity Guidelines for Older Adults

For individuals aged 65 and over, the following guidelines provide a framework for staying physically active:

- **Daily activity:** Strive to engage in some form of physical activity every day, even if it's light in intensity. This could involve a leisurely stroll, gentle stretching, or basic mobility exercises.
- **Strength, balance, and flexibility:** Incorporate activities that specifically target the improvement of strength, balance, and flexibility into your routine on at least two days a week. These exercises are invaluable for maintaining stability and preventing falls.
- **Moderate or vigorous activity:** Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity each week. If you are already active, consider engaging in 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity weekly. Alternatively, you can combine both moderate and vigorous activities to reach your target.
- **Break up sitting time:** Reduce prolonged periods of sitting or lying down by breaking them up with short bursts of physical activity. Even simple movements, like standing up and stretching, can contribute to your overall well-being.

Before embarking on your exercise routine, it's essential to make some necessary preparations:

- **Sturdy support:** Ensure you have something sturdy and stable to hold onto during exercises. A kitchen worktop is an ideal choice.
- **Supportive footwear:** Wear supportive footwear that provides stability and comfort.
- **Stay hydrated:** Keep a glass of water within reach to stay hydrated during your workout.
- **Start slowly:** Begin with exercises that you can comfortably manage. Start at a slow pace and gradually build up your routine.
- **Medical consultation:** If you have a heart condition or any other medical condition that may affect your ability to exercise, it's advisable to consult with your GP or healthcare provider before starting an exercise regimen.

These simple preparations will help ensure a safe and effective exercise session, tailored to your individual needs and capabilities.

## Evidence Based Exercises

The 'Otago Exercise Programme' is led by trained Otago Leaders, and the 'Falls Management Exercise Programme (FaME)' is led by Postural Stability Instructors (PSIs).

These two programmes are recommended for those at high risk of falls as they have been shown to both reduce falls and improve strength and balance. Sometimes they have different names (e.g. Strong and Steady), but they are led by trained instructors who can adapt and progress the programme to meet your specific needs.

Staying active is one of the most important things you can do to reduce your risk of falling and maintain your independence. The videos below, developed by Professor Dawn Skelton – a renowned expert in falls prevention and healthy ageing at Glasgow Caledonian University – offer a few of the evidence-based exercises designed to help improve strength, balance and confidence.

Before starting, please make sure the exercises are right for you. Everyone's ability is different, so it's important to match the exercises to your own level of mobility. To help you decide, start by watching the two short videos first:

- Falls Prevention Exercises: An Introduction
- Exercise Level Test

You will find these videos below.

These will help you understand which level of exercise is suitable for you. If you're unsure or have any medical conditions, speak to your GP or physiotherapist before beginning.

## Video Resources

These evidence-based exercise sessions are structured in levels. Start at the right level for you and build up gradually.

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### **Falls Prevention Exercises: An Introduction**

A short video to help you understand the benefits of strength and balance exercises.

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### **Exercise Level Test**

A quick test to help you work out which level is right for you.

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**Strength and Balance: Level One**

A gentle introduction to strength and balance movements for beginners.

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**Strength and Balance: Level Two**

A moderate session for those who are already fairly active.

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**Strength and Balance: Level Three**

A more advanced session designed for those with good mobility and balance.

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Can you get up from the floor if you fall?

Being able to get up from the floor is important, as if we fall, we may not injure ourselves, but may have to spend a long time on the floor if we cannot get up. This leads to concern about falls and avoidance of activity, which can just make things worse.

Getting up from the floor is like any movement, it needs practice or we get rusty. If you can get up from the floor, even with difficulty, practice this skill more regularly, and it will get easier. Take a look at the [videos on NHS Inform](#) that show you how to practice at home (but always have someone around just in case).



We thank Professor Dawn Skelton (Glasgow Caledonian University and Director of Later Life Training) for allowing us to share these videos. We would also like to acknowledge the following content resource: [www.fallsassistant.org.uk/exercise-centre](http://www.fallsassistant.org.uk/exercise-centre).

## Find Local Exercise Classes

These classes, which often cover activities like aerobic exercises, tai chi, dancing, or bowls, are enjoyable and tailored to older adults.

Beyond the fitness benefits, joining an exercise class boosts your social interactions, providing opportunities for new friendships and shared motivation. A group dynamic can also help keep you motivated and committed to your goals.

### Age UK Teesside

We run activities for people aged 50+ in Teesside. Regular activities take place at our centres in Middlesbrough, Stockton, Hartlepool and Redcar. Click on the link below to find out what is going on in your area.

[View activities in Middlesbrough](#)

[View activities in Stockton](#)

[View activities in Redcar](#)

### Find the Right Class

Find out about exercise classes specifically designed for older individuals. Ideally, consider classes aimed at falls prevention, often labelled as "postural stability" or "Otago" programs.

Local leisure centres, authorities and voluntary organisations can provide more information on available classes:

[Move It Or Lose It: Find My Nearest Class](#)

[Age UK: Exercise and Physical Activity Classes](#)

### Exercise at Home

If you're not quite ready for group classes or prefer exercising at home, explore our range of simple exercises that you can do in the comfort of your own space.

[Steady On Your Feet: Staying Active](#)

## Strength Exercises

Whether you've taken a break from exercise or are just starting, these gentle exercises are straightforward to follow.

### Prepare Your Space

To get started with chair-based strength exercises, you'll need a stable chair that doesn't have wheels and won't slip on the surface it's placed on. Ensure that you can comfortably sit with your feet flat on the floor and your knees bent at right angles. Chairs with armrests should be avoided as they may limit your range of motion.

### Dress Comfortably and Stay Hydrated

Choose loose, comfortable clothing that allows for freedom of movement. Keep a bottle of water within reach to stay well-hydrated during your exercise session.

### Gradual Progression

Remember that progress is achieved through gradual increments. Begin with a manageable number of repetitions for each exercise, and as you become more comfortable, aim to incrementally increase the repetitions over time.

### Consistency Matters

For the most effective results, incorporate these strength exercises into your routine on a regular basis. Consistency is key to improving your overall health, mobility, and strength.

By incorporating these gentle strength exercises into your day, you're actively enhancing your health and mobility. These exercises can be tailored to suit your fitness level, ensuring that you can safely and comfortably enjoy the benefits of regular physical activity.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vv0lgUuQosE> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fqltYG4Bfes>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M0ampRReDXA> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0I9jj\\_vD5GM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0I9jj_vD5GM)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=90Khz0gNmug>

### NHS Strength Exercises

### NHS Strength and Flexibility Exercises

## Flexibility Exercises

Whether you're returning to exercise after a break or starting anew, these exercises are gentle and designed so you can simply follow along.

### Prepare Your Space

Ensure you have a comfortable, uncluttered space for your exercises. Wear loose, comfortable clothing that allows for freedom of movement. Keep a bottle of water handy to stay hydrated during your routine.

### Gradual Progression

Don't worry if you haven't been active for a while. These exercises are beginner-friendly. Start with a comfortable number of repetitions for each exercise and gradually increase them over time. Consistency and patience are key to making progress.

By incorporating these flexibility exercises into your routine, you'll be actively enhancing your health and mobility. These exercises are adaptable to your fitness level, allowing you to enjoy the benefits of improved flexibility and overall well-being.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cH6gfWu216A> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2w80Gul-Syl>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vv0lgUuQosE> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J7BcXbsy1\\_Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J7BcXbsy1_Q)

[NHS Flexibility Exercises](#)

[NHS Strength and Flexibility Exercises](#)

## Balance Exercises

Whether you're reinitiating exercise or starting fresh, these exercises are designed to improve balance and help you move around.

### Create a Safe Environment

To ensure safety, consider performing these exercises near a wall or a stable chair just in case you need support. Wear loose, comfortable clothing that allows for freedom of movement, and have a bottle of water within reach to stay hydrated during your workout.

### Gradual Progression

If it's been a while since you last exercised, don't worry. These balance exercises are suited for beginners. Begin with a comfortable number of repetitions for each exercise, and gradually increase them over time. Patience and consistency will help you make steady progress.

By incorporating these balance exercises into your routine, you'll actively improve your health and mobility. These exercises can be adapted to your fitness level, ensuring that you can comfortably and safely enjoy the benefits of enhanced balance and overall well-being.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ujoD1l4fnP4> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C0nVlrJ26dw>  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A28iwwa1J\\_M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A28iwwa1J_M) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mrPjjFlp9wo>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E0Mez6c7Pk0> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KtE2\\_SmXmT8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KtE2_SmXmT8)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1jrC9NdH3EE> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HiDpYePaUHg>

### NHS Balance Exercises

## General Exercises

They are beneficial for general health, and are perfect to add to your routine alongside more strength and balance-based activities.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w3VICljvWsY> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J6HGXUS7IYI>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YpC1zw7VPGE> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bqr5Wcru9N4>  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2Bf\\_QnxLtw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2Bf_QnxLtw) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vG2h46j-VAs>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z0TokrUpv8Q> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ONvVm0FpsII>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-bPfqpSMin8> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jVyKoHIQAYa>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-w4XgMBpsqk> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EXtBT-WAu4g>

## Freedom To Move

Being active doesn't have to require a costly investment. Teaming up with Bill Bailey, We Are Undefeatable has created three easy to follow videos that show you the free ways you can stay active through everyday activities that are suited to everyone's capabilities.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GbfOPpHfLoc> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hs\\_r9WEkg6w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hs_r9WEkg6w)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jMAxBbFd1cg> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nDz\\_MRkJFC4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nDz_MRkJFC4)

We Are Undefeatable: Freedom To Move

## 5 Five In Five

Designed for people living with long term health conditions but also useful for older adults, these five minute mini-workouts are completely customisable to suit your needs and ability.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ayRZ9dpb9G0>

Getting started is simple. Download the Five In Five booklet to find different mini-workouts. Each one includes five movements which you can do seated or standing for one minute each, to build a five minute workout.

Whether you want to improve your strength, unwind and relax, or just have a bit of fun, there's bound to be a Five In Five that suits you.

[We Are Undefeatable: Five In Five Booklet](#)

[We Are Undefeatable: Five In Five](#)



## NHS Resources

Older adults should do some type of physical activity every day. It can help to improve your health and reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke. We've gathered some simple and handy exercises from the NHS to support healthy and active ageing.

Discover a wealth of expert guidance on staying physically active, enhancing strength and balance, and the benefits of an active lifestyle during later years. Explore these NHS resources and start to reduce your risk of falls, and enjoy a healthier, more active life.

Speak to a GP first if you have not exercised for some time, or if you have medical conditions or concerns. Make sure your activity and its intensity are appropriate for your fitness.

[NHS UK: Sitting Exercises](#)

[NHS UK: Strength Exercises](#)

[NHS UK: Flexibility Exercises](#)

[NHS UK: Strength and Flexibility Exercises](#)

[NHS UK: Balance Exercises](#)



# Find Support



## South Tees Falls Team

If you require general falls prevention advice and support or don't know where to start, please contact the Falls Team at [ste-tr.fallsteam@nhs.net](mailto:ste-tr.fallsteam@nhs.net)

[Visit South Tees Falls Team website](#)

## Middlesbrough Staying Put Agency

Middlesbrough Staying Put Agency (SPA) is a home improvement agency that offers specialist support and advice to older, vulnerable, and disabled people to help them remain safe and independent in their own homes.

**Telephone:** 0800 5875 184

**Email:** [Stayingputagency@middlesbrough.gov.uk](mailto:Stayingputagency@middlesbrough.gov.uk)

[Visit Staying Put Agency website](#)

## Connect - Monitoring and Response service

We offer emergency help and support, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Connect is easy to use, and gives you extra security and peace of mind. All of our staff are highly-trained and qualified. We're committed to helping our residents stay safe and independent in their own homes, and we pride ourselves on the quality of our 24-hour monitoring and response service.

**Telephone:** 01642 726009

**Email:** [controlroom@middlesbrough.gov.uk](mailto:controlroom@middlesbrough.gov.uk)

[Visit Connect website](#)

## Middlesbrough Assistive Technology

Assistive technology means devices or systems which can help you to do everyday things which might be hard or impossible otherwise. It can help with a range of difficulties, including problems with memory and movement. It can also be called 'technology-enabled care' (TEC).

**Telephone:** 01642 726009

**Email:** [telecare@middlesbrough.gov.uk](mailto:telecare@middlesbrough.gov.uk)

[Visit Middlesbrough Assistive Technology website](#)

## Middlesbrough Hospital to Home Service

Supporting older, vulnerable and disabled Middlesbrough residents, to live independently when discharged from hospital. Our Prevention Liaison Officer works with hospitals to support discharges, as well as keeping in touch with patients when they return home.

**Telephone:** 01642 726500

**Email:** [hospital2home@middlesbrough.gov.uk](mailto:hospital2home@middlesbrough.gov.uk)

Visit Hospital to Home website

Sensory Support

The Sensory Support Service offers advice and support to Middlesbrough residents who are D/deaf or have hearing loss, are blind, partially - sighted, or have sight loss, are deafblind or have dual sensory loss.

Telephone: 01642 065070

Email: [adultaccesssteam@middlesbrough.gov.uk](mailto:adultaccesssteam@middlesbrough.gov.uk)

Visit Sensory Support website

Library Support Services - Redcar and Cleveland

Library support services across Redcar and Cleveland. Find information on activities/ resources. Also home delivery service for anyone who struggles to get to a library who would like books, jigsaws and more delivered to their home.

Telephone: 01287 612517

Email: [health-wellbeing-libraries@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk](mailto:health-wellbeing-libraries@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk)

RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind People)

If you are struggling with sight loss and would benefit from practical and or emotional support, please call our Helpline.

Helpline: 0303 123 9999

Email: [helpline@rnib.org.uk](mailto:helpline@rnib.org.uk)

Visit RNIB website

Make Every Contact Count

The website aims to help you raise awareness, motivate and signpost people to help them improve their health and wellbeing. At the touch of a button you can access information on full range of self-care, national and local support services.

Visit MECC website

Carers Together

For some people, becoming an unpaid carer may be a gradual process, for others it may happen overnight. Whatever the circumstances, it is important that unpaid carers are recognised and supported.

Visit Carers Together website

#### Age UK Teesside

Helping older people get the best out of life. Age UK Teesside has a wide range of services to help from over 50s in Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland to achieve the best out of their lives, their finances, social life and health & wellbeing

Telephone: 01642 805500

Email: [info@ageukteesside.org.uk](mailto:info@ageukteesside.org.uk)

[Visit Age UK Teesside website](#)

#### Dementia Diagnosis and Support

A community base for people living with dementia, and their carers. The hub is a place to meet up, take part in activities and events, and chat to people from various support organisations for help and advice. Information is available at the hub for anyone pre- and post-dementia diagnosis.

Telephone: 01642 368945

Email: [rucksana.aslam@nhs.net](mailto:rucksana.aslam@nhs.net)

Age UK Teesside's Dementia Advisor Service is a comprehensive service for people diagnosed with Dementia, their Carers, professionals supporting clients with dementia and anyone wanting to learn more.

Telephone: 07719 029 674

Email: [carolyn.martell@Ageukteesside.org.uk](mailto:carolyn.martell@Ageukteesside.org.uk)

#### Age Friendly Middlesbrough

The Age Friendly Middlesbrough Leads are working in partnership with key organisations to create an age-friendly town where older people can live healthy and active lives. Drawing together the experience of older people, to improve delivery of local services and activity using the W.H.O 8 domains of Age Friendly Cities and Communities framework as a guide.

Telephone: 01642 728756

Email: [Agefriendly@middlesbrough.gov.uk](mailto:Agefriendly@middlesbrough.gov.uk)

**STEADY ON  
YOUR FEET**

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