

Herefordshire Falls Prevention Service

A Guide for Professionals

Introduction

Fall -"an event whereby an individual comes to rest on the ground or another lower level with or without loss of consciousness" (NICE 2004)

35% of people over the age of 65 years fall each year and falls are the third most common cause of accidental death in Herefordshire. This will rise with the ageing and growing population. Most falls do not result in serious injury but can have considerable consequences for an individual. These may include a decrease in confidence, fear of falling, loss of mobility and an increase in dependency.

Risk factors for falls include:

- History of falls
- Taking 4 or more medications
- Balance, gait or mobility deficit
- Fear of falling
- Visual impairment
- Home hazards

Falls are not an inevitable part of getting older and many falls can be prevented.

Aims of the Falls Prevention Service

The Falls Prevention Service is a specialist service that aims to:

- Reduce individual's risk factors for falling
- Reduce the number of falls and injuries from falling
- Prevent ambulance call outs and attendance at A&E
- Prevent hospital admissions, premature admission into Care Homes and increased dependence on carers
- Reduce fear of falling, maximise independent living and quality of life
- Help individuals cope in the event of a fall including how to get up from the floor
- Advise and educate on falls prevention and bone health

Who can refer?

Any professional can refer to the service, including:

- GP's
- Consultants
- Social Workers
- Nurses
- Physiotherapists
- Occupational Therapists
- A&E, MIU, Fracture clinic
- Voluntary or Independent sector

It is also possible for people to refer themselves to the service using the self- referral form found on our website.

How does the service work?

The Falls Prevention Service consists of Specialist Physiotherapists, an Occupational Therapist, Support Workers and an administration assistant.

Specialist Physiotherapists

Clinics held weekly at Hereford, Ledbury, Leominster, Ross, Bromyard and Kington.

Criteria for referral may include:

- Anyone with risk factors for falling or who is fearful about falling (can be a pre-faller, single faller or recurrent faller)
- Balance, strength or gait deficits
- General unsteadiness and dizziness
- Low activity levels
- Osteoporosis/osteopenia
- Difficulty getting up from the floor or coping in the event of a fall
- Fear of falling and loss of confidence
- Walking aid and equipment assessment
- Potential home hazards
- Risk modification

Following a comprehensive assessment treatment may include:

- Prescription of home based individually tailored exercise programmes
- One-to-one exercise sessions or balance circuits
- Backward chaining and floor work
- Advice regarding coping strategies, getting up from the floor and lifestyle
- Advice and/or provision of a walking aid
- Onward referral to community based exercise groups and other agencies

Specialist Occupational Therapist

With consent, an appointment will be made for a home visit to complete a comprehensive specialist assessment considering overall wellbeing. It may include discussion about managing at home, hobbies and social interests.

Recommendations will then be discussed through a problem solving approach, aiming to promote independence, safety, confidence and overall stamina in daily routines. This may include advice, equipment and minor adaptations in the home to meet individual needs and include a short period of rehabilitation ensuring any recommendations/advice meet individual needs.

Falls Prevention Service Support Workers

Support workers are available to review patients at home to assist with prescribed home-exercise programmes, install aids to daily living, give support with increasing confidence and mobility and help formulate personal falls action plans.

How do I refer?

Falls Prevention Service Referral Form

Referral forms and self-referral forms can be obtained from our website at:

www.wyevalley.nhs.uk

(Services > Community Services > Falls)

To refer, please complete a referral form, which includes a Falls Risk Assessment Tool (FRAT), as shown below:

| | | YES | NO |
|----|---|-----|----|
| 1. | Is there a history of any fall in the previous year? Number of falls in past 12 months | | |
| 2. | Is the person on four or more different medications per day? | | |
| 3. | Does the person have a diagnosis of stroke or Parkinson's disease? | | |
| 4. | Does the person have any problems with their balance? | | |
| 5. | Is the person <u>unable</u> to stand up from a chair of knee height <u>without</u> pushing up with their arms and hands? | | |
| 6. | If the person has fallen, do they complain of blackouts, loss of consciousness? | | |

Completion of the referral form will enable us to establish a person's risk of falling and individual needs in order to send them to the most appropriate aspect of the service. If you are certain which aspect of the service the person requires please tick the appropriate box on the referral form.

All referral and self-referral forms should be sent to:

**Leominster Community Hospital,
South Street,
Leominster
HR6 8JH**

Fax: 01568 617306

E-mail: fallsreferrals@nhs.net

Further information and advice about the service can be found at:

www.wyevalley.nhs.uk

(Services > Community Services > Falls)

Or please telephone:

01568 617309

Consultant Geriatricians

Consultant Geriatrician clinics are held at Hereford County Hospital and Ross and Leominster Community Hospitals.

Please note this is GP referral only and cannot be accessed through the Herefordshire Falls Prevention Service.

If the following factors are present consider referral to Consultant Geriatrician:

- Multiple co-morbidities
- Complex frail elderly patients
- Dizziness or suspected postural hypotension
- Multiple unexplained falls
- History of fragility fractures

Please send referrals to:

Dr Vicky Alner
Consultant Physician in Geriatric Medicine
Department of Geriatric Medicine
Fred Bulmer Building
County Hospital
Union Walk
Hereford
HR1 2ER

Fax: 01432 372982

Consider undertaking the following tests first:

- Routine bloods, including FBC for Hb/Anaemia level, Folate, U&Es, Vitamin D, Vitamin B12, Thyroid Function Test – TSH, Glucose
- Lying and standing blood pressures
- Medication review