

Herefordshire Falls Prevention Service

Preventing Falls

Staying Safe and Steady

Preventing Falls

35% of people over the age of 65 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 and many of these falls will result in fractures. The cost to society is huge, not to mention the personal cost of falling to the individual.

There are many reasons as to why people fall, but falls are not an inevitable part of getting older and many falls can be prevented. You may be at risk of falling if:

- You have fallen before
- You take four or more medications a day
- You have trouble with your balance
- You have difficulty walking or rising from a low bed or chair
- You have a fear of falling
- Your medications have been changed within the last two weeks
- You have vision or hearing problems
- You suffer from incontinence
- You suffer from poor memory or depression
- You wear the wrong footwear or have foot problems
- Your home is cluttered, poorly lit, or has loose fitting carpets or rugs, etc.

There are lots of simple things that you can do to help you stay steady on your feet, whether you are worried about falling, are fit and active, or have difficulty with your mobility.

Be active

You can help to prevent falls by staying fit and active. Physical activity helps to improve mobility, strength, balance and flexibility.

There are a variety of ways to be active which can include gardening, housework, walking, dancing, swimming, Tai-Chi and exercise classes.

It is also possible to do some simple balance training exercises at home. If you have a health condition and are unsure as to what exercise is right for you, please discuss it with your GP before exercising.

For more information regarding exercise opportunities in Herefordshire, please refer to the Falls Prevention Service website, details are available on the back page of this leaflet.

Stay healthy and eat well

Getting your Flu jab and taking advantage of health checks offered by your doctor will help maintain your wellbeing. Being unwell can cause people to fall.

Eat foods that are rich in calcium and vitamin D, which are both essential for healthy bones, for example dairy produce, eggs, green leafy vegetables, and oily tinned fish. Sunshine is also a good source of vitamin D.

Avoid missing meals and eat regular meals throughout the day.

Drink at least eight cups of fluid each day, approximately one litre. Some drinks, such as tea, can act as a diuretic and make you want to pass urine, so make sure that the fluid includes lots of water.

Try and eat five portions of fruit and vegetables a day; fresh, frozen, chilled, canned, 100% juice, and dried fruit and vegetables all count.

Understand your medicines

Ask for an annual medication review by your GP if you are taking four or more medicines.

Tell the doctor or pharmacist if you are experiencing any side effects. With regular monitoring, problems can be easily avoided or minimised. There may also be an alternative drug that can be used.

Some medications can cause dizziness, drowsiness, or affect your balance, so be extra careful when rising from lying to sitting or from sitting to standing.

When buying medicines over-the-counter always inform the pharmacist of any prescribed and over-the-counter medicines you are already taking. Similarly, when seeing your doctor, inform him / her of any over-the-counter medication you may be using.

Alcohol will increase the risk of falls whether combined with medication or not.

Eyesight and hearing

Both eyesight and hearing play an important part in balance and mobility.

It is important to have your eyes checked and glasses prescription reviewed at least every two years, or every year if over 70 years of age.

Bi-focal and vari-focal glasses can alter perception of distance and so care must be taken on stairs and steps.

Hearing loss is more likely with increasing age, so it is important to have regular hearing checks and ensure hearing aids are well maintained.

Foot health

Certain foot problems can affect balance, so it is important to always report any foot problems.

Footwear should be well-fitting, ideally with low heels, high sides, thin soles and a good tread.

Slippers should have backs.

Keeping safe

Keep the house well lit, especially on the stairs and landing

Turn on a night-light or torch if getting out of bed at night

Check the house for trip hazards, such as rugs, cables, frayed carpets, or clutter

Handrails on both sides of the stairs can make them safer

Be aware of where pets are when moving around

Keep warm; cold muscles do not work well

Take time when rising from lying to sitting or from sitting to standing as moving too quickly can make people feel light-headed

Keep things in easy reach to avoid overstretching, climbing or bending

Do not rush to answer the door or telephone

Outside, watch out for uneven paths and slippery surfaces

Consider a community alarm and ensure it is worn

If adaptations, handrails or specialised equipment are needed at home, then an occupational therapist may be able to help and advise.

How to cope if you have a fall

If you have a fall, stay calm and try not to panic.

If you are unable to get up:

(Or if you have had a hip or knee replacement in the past 6 weeks)

Attract Help

- Use a telephone or personal alarm
- Bang on the floor or shout

Keep Warm

- Cover yourself with towels/ blankets/ rugs/ coats, etc

Keep Moving

- Try to change position and move all your joints
- Move to a dry space if you relieve your bladder
- Try to crawl to a softer floor if lying on a hard floor.

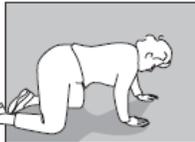
If you are not injured and are able to get up:



1. Roll to one side



2. Ease onto your elbows



3. Push up onto your hands and knees



4. Crawl to a sturdy piece of furniture



5. Put both hands up onto the furniture



6. Bring your strongest leg up
Place your foot flat on the floor



7. Push up with your arms and legs
Turn around to sit down and rest.

Have a rest at any stage in the process, but if you cannot get up, do not keep trying. Save energy to keep warm and moving while you call and wait for help.

Have an action plan in case of a fall

How will I get help?

- Community alarm
- Carry a telephone with you
- Know who you will telephone and have the number to hand

Can helpers get into the house?

- Leave a key with someone you trust
- Consider a key safe

Can I learn how to get up from the floor?

- Use this leaflet and keep it to hand

Are you unsteady on your feet?

- Contact a health professional for advice on services to improve your balance
- Stay active
- Drink plenty of fluids and eat well
- Look after your feet and walking aids
- Have regular vision and hearing checks

Tell a health professional about your fall.

There may be a treatable cause.

Herefordshire Falls Prevention Service

Herefordshire Falls Prevention Service is a free service for older people who have fallen, are at risk of or are worried about falling, or have concerns about their balance.

The Falls Prevention Service can help people to:

- Identify the cause of falls
- Prevent further falls
- Improve strength, balance, mobility and dizziness
- Regain confidence
- Maintain independence

Referrals to the service can be made by any health professional or by self-referral, using the self-referral form on our website at www.wyevalley.nhs.uk

For further information:

Please feel free to contact the service directly on:

Telephone - 01568 617309

Alternatively, further information is available at:

www.wyevalley.nhs.uk

(Services > Community Services > Falls)

Contact us

Herefordshire Falls Prevention Service

Leominster Community Hospital
South Street
Leominster
HR6 8JH

Tel: 01568 617309

Fax: 01568 617306

Email: fallsreferrals@nhs.net

Website: www.wyevalley.nhs.uk

(Services > Community Services > Falls)

How to provide feedback

Our aim is to provide a quality of care we would want for ourselves, our families and friends.

If there was anything that we could have done better please let us know via the department/ward staff or the Patient Experience Team, available Monday - Thursday, 8:30am - 5pm, Friday 8:30am-4:30pm on 01432 372986 or email us at:

makingexperiencescount@wvt.nhs.uk