



PREVENTING FALLS

As we get older, our risk of falling increases and this can be attributed to a range of factors such as:

- Weak muscles and stiff joints
- Heart conditions or changes in blood pressure
- Hearing or sight problems which may affect balance
- Side effects of some medication
- Loose rugs or poor lighting
- Tiredness
- Alcohol



⚠️ CONTRARY TO POPULAR BELIEF, FALLS ARE NOT AN INEVITABLE PART OF AGEING AND THERE ARE THINGS YOU CAN DO TO PREVENT THEM FROM HAPPENING.



EXERCISE

Physical activity is extremely important as we age (refer to our article on The Wonders of

Walking). Statistically, if you are fit, you are less likely to fall as regular exercise helps to strengthen muscles and improve balance.



DIET

Eating foods rich in calcium is necessary to strengthen bones

and drinking plenty of fluids is essential to health.



MEDICATION

Have your GP review your medication annually and inform them if your

medication is making you feel dizzy or unwell. In addition, have your eyes and ears checked regularly.



CHANGES TO YOUR HOME

Many falls happen in the home or garden when one is rushing – to answer the door or get to the phone. You may wish to consider adapting your home to make it safer including:

- Lighting – keep your home well lit
- Don't leave clutter lying around
- Use non-slip mats under rugs and in the bathroom
- Clean up any spillages
- Wear fitted shoes and not open-backed slippers or 'stokies' as they stretch and your feet can slip out unexpectedly
- Make sure any walking device is adjusted to your height
- Never hold onto furniture – even if you think it is sturdy

PRACTICAL IDEAS TO PREVENT FALLS

When getting up, don't do it all at once. Sit up slowly and adjust to the positional change. Place your feet slightly apart to give you a stable supporting surface to stand up safely.

Stand up using your body's momentum by positioning your shoulders over your knees as you stand.

Before taking a step, stand and gently sway from side to side to ensure you are balanced.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU FALL?

In the event that you have a fall, make yourself comfortable and count to 10.

If you are not hurt, stay calm. Sit up and rest until you feel able to get up.

In the unfortunate event that you are hurt, try to stay calm and crawl to the phone. If that is not possible, make a noise to attract attention. It is advisable to have a panic button on a necklace or wristband for situations like these. If you live independently, this can be linked to your alarm company. Most retirement villages offer this service so enquire with management if you haven't already done so.



DISCLAIMER If you are not currently active, you should check with your doctor before commencing an exercise programme.

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