

# Preventing falls

As we get older, we may experience changes in balance, muscle strength, vision and medications - all of which can affect our risk of falling. Falls can lead to serious injuries such as hip fractures, as well as loss of confidence and independence.

Falls are the leading cause of injury among older Australians - but the good news is that they are not inevitable as we get older. There are some steps we can take to reduce our risk of falls. These include staying active, making small changes around the home, and taking care of our health.

Below are some tips on simple ways you can reduce your risk of falls.

## Staying active

Regular physical activity and exercise is the best way to reduce our risk of falls. Improving balance and leg strength is key.

It is recommended that we be active for at least 30 minutes most days, if not every day, and that we do strength and balance activities on at least 2 days.

Some examples of strength and balance activities include standing on one leg (with or without a support), marching on the spot with high knees, squats, heel raises and side leg raises.

## Check your home and surrounds for hazards

Take a look around your home and remove anything that may put you at risk of tripping or slipping.

- Keep pathways clear by clearing any clutter or electrical cords.
- Use non-slip mats in bathrooms.
- Flatten any carpets or rugs that have curled up.
- Ensure good lighting, especially on stairs and at night. You may like to get night lights to put in hallways and stairways.
- Install grab rails in the bathroom and handrails on steps if needed.
- Make sure you have non-slip shoes with good grip, are supportive, and fit well.
- When out and about, pay attention to any trip hazards on pathways, other people around, and steps. Take your time and try not to rush your movements.
- You can assess the safety of your home by using the Home Safety Checklist on Active and Healthy.

## Look after your health

Some changes in our health can increase our risk of falls. It's important to talk with your GP or other health professional about any concerns you have.

- It is recommended to have regular eye checks every 1-2 years unless advised otherwise. Vision problems, such as cataracts and changes in your prescription, can increase your risk of falls if left untreated.
- It is recommended people aged 60+ should have their hearing checked annually. Some ear problems can impact your balance.
- Eat well and stay hydrated. Good nutrition and fluids support your overall health and strength.
- Review your medications with your health professional. Some medications may increase your risk of falling, so it's important to talk about potential side effects.

Information provided on Safe Exercise at Home is not intended to replace individual health professional care. If you have any concerns or questions about what you can safely do, you should seek professional advice from your doctor, physiotherapist, or other health professional with expertise in exercise prescription.

Exercises are performed at your own risk.