

Conwy Falls Prevention Information Pack

Information on how to prevent falls



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Falling, slipping or tripping is the most common sort of accident in the home, but it's easy to avoid many of these falls. This pack contains practical advice as well as simple procedures to follow that will reduce the risk of having a fall and help you to stay independent.

There are a number of reasons why people have a fall, but the main ones are:

- **Lack of balance:** Your body's reactions slow down as you get older and some types of illness can also affect your balance.
- **Weak muscles:** Diseases such as osteoarthritis or osteoporosis make moving around and getting sufficient exercise difficult, and this causes the muscles to get weaker.
- **Faulty eyesight:** Your sight gets worse as you get older, and conditions such as cataracts or macular degeneration can affect your vision, thus making tripping or falling more likely.

Medication: Some types of medication such as tranquillisers, antidepressants, sleeping tablets and some heart tablets can cause dizziness. You should always take the medicines prescribed for you, but have a word with your doctor if any new medication makes you feel dizzy.

You can reduce your risk of a fall by following these steps:

- Take physical exercise such as walking, light gardening, housework, dancing and keep fit classes regularly. Tai Chi, for example, can improve your balance so you will be less likely to fall.
- Don't be too ready to take risks, indoors or out. Be careful when you stand up as a sudden lowering of blood pressure can cause dizziness. Stand up slowly to give your blood pressure time to adjust
- Take care of yourself. Remember to eat well, wear suitable clothing and be aware of changes to your health.
- Keep your house tidy and take advantage of any services and equipment that are available to make your home safe.

Information for Family, Friends, Neighbours & Carers.

Family, friends, neighbours and carers can help an older person make their home a safer place. You can encourage people to take better care of themselves and make them more aware of the dangers while, at the same time, keeping in regular touch.

If one of the following descriptions is true of someone you know, that individual could be at risk:

- They have fallen at least once or more often during the past year
- They feel dizzy or light-headed when standing up or turning
- The person's balance is generally poor
- They take more than four types of medication a day
- They have difficulty sleeping
- They tend to switch the heat off to save money
- Their home is cluttered or poorly lit

What can you do?

- Help to make the home safer - by doing repairs and adaptations
- Encourage the individual to take regular physical exercise and eat healthily
- Make sure the person arranges regular health checks
- Encourage the individual to use the fall prevention information pack

What should I do if someone has a fall and can't get up?

- Don't move them and keep them warm
- Don't panic and keep talking to them
- Call for help - ambulance or family Doctor



What to do if you have a fall

- Keep calm! Lie quietly and assess the situation.
- If you have hurt yourself and are unable to get up, wait and call for help.
- Use your pendant alarm if you have one.
- If you can move, try to reach the phone and keep warm. (It's a good idea to keep a folded blanket near floor level - under the bed or sofa, at the bottom of the wardrobe or in a drawer.)
- Move your body as much as you can so you don't get pressure sores and don't get cold.
- If you can get up, get up safely using the **4 point plan**.

The 4 Point Plan

1. Roll onto your strongest side and put your arm and leg in front of you.
2. Raise yourself slowly onto your hands and knees by pushing on your hands and rolling your hips. Crawl to the nearest steady chair, stool or to the bed.
3. Put your two hands on the chair or piece of furniture to steady yourself, and then raise your strongest leg first, pushing up slowly until you are standing, still holding on to the chair arm or piece of furniture.
4. After getting up, turn carefully and then sit down for a rest. Arrange to see your family doctor. Any fall can turn out to be dangerous.



Small changes to your home can reduce accidents

- Make sure that the stairs, your kitchen and living room are light enough
- Use 100 watt bulbs or long-life bulbs so you do not have to change them so often
- Never climb on chairs or tables - use a small pair of steps
- Don't leave clutter around that someone could trip over
- If a carpet or mat is worn or loose, if you can, get a new one laid or perhaps repaired and nail or tape down the edges of mats to stop people slipping or tripping. You will see objects better if you have a plain light-coloured carpet.
- Fit handrails on both sides of the front door, stairs, toilet and bath. Keep things you use regularly on racks or in drawers that are easy to reach
- Use anti-slip rubber mats in the bath or shower
- Don't overload your electric sockets with too much electrical equipment
- Put a bright-coloured collar on your pet so you can see it more easily.



Most important of all, test your fire alarm every week and make sure everyone knows how to escape in safety from a fire.



It is important to keep using the stairs – the exercise helps keep your muscles strong and your balance and co-ordination in good order. But take care!

- Lighting- Two good ways of improving visibility on the stairs are having light coloured walls and using high wattage light bulbs. There should be light switches at the top and bottom of the stairs.
- Try to avoid climbing the stairs if you do not feel safe
- Wear your glasses all the time if you need them
- Carrying things up and down stairs - Make sure you always have one hand free to use the handrail, and never carry too much or too heavy a load.
- Take care, especially when using unfamiliar stairs
- Cleaning - Use a wireless vacuum cleaner or a dustpan and brush, but take your time. Mop up any spilt liquid immediately.
- Keep the stairs clear - Never leave anything on the stairs and take care not to trip over your pet.
- The carpet – make sure the stair carpet is kept in good repair



A nourishing and balanced diet is essential for good health. That means eating a variety of the right sorts of food

Fruit, vegetables and starchy foods

Fruits and vegetables contain many vitamins and minerals, as well as fibre, and these help to lower cholesterol and protect against heart disease. Starchy foods such as bread, rice, pasta and potatoes provide energy and contain a lot of vitamins and fibre; which helps guard against constipation.



You should try to eat at least 5 helpings of fruit and vegetables every day

Milk and dairy products

Milk and dairy products contain plenty of calcium and are good for strengthening the bones, thus lessening the risk of fractures, but choose the low fat options.



Try to get some milk, cheese and yoghurt every day

Meat, fish and alternatives



Meat and food such as beans, pulses and nuts are good sources of protein and iron which control cholesterol and blood pressure. Fish contains essential vitamins and minerals and oily fish such as tuna and sardines are full of vitamins A and D. You can also get vitamin D from sunshine so try to spend some time outdoors.



Eat fish twice a week and oily fish once a week

Fatty Foods

Many sweet foods such as cakes, biscuits, chocolate, cream, butter and soft drinks contain a lot of fat and calories. Saturated fat can increase cholesterol in your blood, and put you at greater risk of heart disease.



You can care for your health by eating healthy food and taking physical exercise, and by taking medicines in a safe and suitable way.



- Ask your family G.P. to review prescriptions for medicine or pills regularly
- Tell your doctor if your medication makes you dizzy
- Remember to finish any course of tablets or medicine, even if you're feeling better
- Never mix tablets or medicine and alcohol
- Ask your doctor for a 'flu jab
- If you don't feel well, tell a member of the family, a neighbour or someone who comes to the house
- Keep your medications and repeat prescriptions together
- Ask your family doctor whether it's safe for you to take part in a local keep fit class such as Tai Chi
- Use the 'Message in a Bottle' scheme to make sure that important medical details about any illness or allergy are easily available to the emergency services

Glasses and Eyesight



If you are over 60 years old, you have the right to have a NHS eye test free of charge, so take advantage of this and arrange a test regularly. You will get a prescription suited to your individual needs and you might even get help with paying for your glasses or a home eye test. **Ask your optician for advice**

Clothes and Shoes

Wearing appropriate shoes and clothing could prevent you falling or tripping

- Don't wear loose trousers or long nightgowns that trail on the floor
- Don't wear loose-fitting shoes or high heels wear flat shoes that have heels and soles combined
- Don't walk in stockinged feet in case you slip



Telecare equipment

Can help manage risks in the home e.g. environmental problems – fire or flood, a build-up of carbon monoxide; or personal problems - having a fall and being unable to get up. Help can be summoned by simply pressing a button or by one of the Telecare sensors automatically alerting the base unit to generate a call to the 24/7 Call Monitoring Centre.

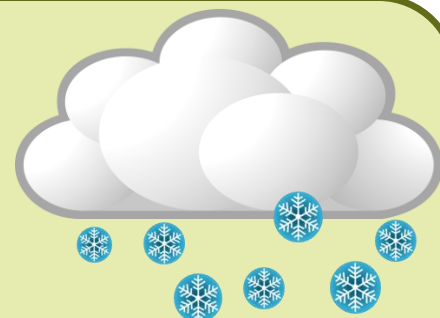


Follow these steps to enjoy yourself and be safe in the garden:

- Remember to wear suitable protective clothing when you are gardening, e.g. gloves and sturdy shoes or boots
- Use suitable tools and follow makers' instruction. Put tools away in a suitable safe place after using them
- Take care that electric cables do not cross paths and places where you walk
- Take care that paths and steps are level and moss-free. Install safety rails to help you move around
- Keep yourself warm but don't do work that is too heavy on cold or very warm days
- Ask a friend, family member or neighbour to help you with heavy tasks
- If you have a safety alarm, you should always wear it when you are at home or in the garden
- Stand up slowly to give your blood pressure time to adjust



When the weather is poor e.g. high winds or icy conditions, consider:



- Do you really need to go out
- Could someone else bring in what you need
- Could you wait another day before you go out
- Could you have your shopping delivered, on-line shopping
- Spread a sand and salt mix on wet or frosty steps and paths in case you slip or fall
- Keep your home warm. Cold muscles don't work so well, and that can cause you to have an accident.

And Remember

- Ask your family, neighbours or professional workers for help.
- Ask your doctor or another professional health worker for information and advice
- Get local services that are available to improve the safety of your home
- Don't rush to answer the phone. Use a combined phone/alarm system so you can answer the phone automatically from your chair, or use a wireless phone or answer machine.

Conwy Access Team Provides a single point of access for information, advice & referrals relating to health and social care services in Conwy

Tel: 0300 456 1111 **Fax:** 01492 576330

E-mail: wellbeing@conwy.gov.uk

Text messages: 07797 870361



Dewis Wales Is an online service designed to give you the information you need to make choices and take control. Through the website, you will have access to a range of information and resources in your area that can help you deal with the things that matter to YOU.

www.dewis.wales



NHS Direct Wales; Is a health advice and information service available 24 hours every day



GP Out of Hours Service is available between 18.30-8.00 am Monday to Friday, all day and night at weekends and bank holidays. If you need to see a doctor call **0300 123 55 66**

If you require a large print version of this pack please contact the Conwy Access Team- 0300 456 1111