

Swindon Safe & Warm

Helping you to

reduce the risk

of falling in your home



Safe & Warm is a Swindon Borough Council led initiative covering selected areas of the borough, which aims to make homes warmer and cheaper to heat and reduce the risk to people from falls and fires within the home.



This booklet is produced in partnership with the Swindon Integrated Falls and Bone Health Service, and is a source of information for fallers and individuals with balance problems.

Falling and balance related problems are not an inevitable result of getting older, but the risk of falling increases with age. Falling and fear of falling can make people lose confidence in carrying out their normal day to day activities. This may lead to a reduction in their physical activity with consequent physical deconditioning, which further increases the risk of falling.

Most falls do not result in a serious injury. However, there is a risk of sustaining a major injury (a broken bone or a serious soft tissue injury) as a result of a fall and recovery from these may not be full and may take a long time.

The purpose of this information booklet is to give you an idea of what you can do to reduce the risk of falling. It also gives you an idea of what you can do and cannot do in the event of a fall to minimise the risk of serious consequences. It will provide you with valuable sources of information and the local and national organisations that can help you deal with your problem.

For further information on the Safe & Warm programme, please contact:

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Section 1

Stop and take Care be 'Falls aware'

The risk of falling increases as you get older. By following some simple practical advice you can reduce the risks of falls and other accidents. You can remember the key points by using the words '**Stop**' and '**Care**'

Stop

Stop

- Stop for a few moments before you move.
- This helps your balance and gives you time to move safely.
- Try not to hurry.

Think

- Think about what you are doing.
- Do things the safest, easiest way.

Observe

- Be observant and pay extra attention to your surroundings both indoors and out.
- Look out for obstacles and hazards, especially if you do not see well.

Plan

- Plan how to remove or avoid hazards, especially in your own home or garden.
- Plan what you should do if you should fall or need help.
- By thinking ahead you can improve safety.
- Warn your visitors about hazards in your home – for example steps between levels.



Front door

Check Points

- 1 Is access to your front door level and safe? Yes No
- 2 Is the area near your path and door well lit? Yes No
- 3 Are any steps safe and easy to see? Yes No
- 4 Can you open the door easily? Are the locks secure? Yes No
- 5 Can you pick up your deliveries (post, papers, milk) quite easily? Yes No
- 6 Has someone reliable got a key in case of emergency? Yes No

Action Points _____

Outside areas

Check Points

- 1 Can you easily open your back door? Yes No
- 2 Is the area well lit? Yes No
- 3 Are any steps safe and easy to see? Yes No
- 4 If you use a dryer or washing line, is it easy to reach and use? Yes No
- 5 Are outside paths in good repair and safe to use? Yes No
- 6 Is all outside 'clutter' kept tidily and out of the way? Yes No
- 7 Can you get to your dustbin safely? Yes No

Action Points _____

Bathroom and toilet

Check Points

- 1 Can you manage your bath or shower safely? Yes No
- 2 Is your bathroom flooring safe and non slip? Yes No
- 3 Are loose mats safe? Yes No
- 4 Are the soap, toiletries and towel in easy reach without bending or stretching? Yes No
- 5 Can you manage to get on and off the toilet easily? Yes No
- 6 Could you raise the alarm if you fell in the bathroom? Yes No

Action Points _____

Living room

Check Points

- 1 Is your favourite chair safe and comfortable and easy to get out of? Yes No
- 2 Is the carpet in good repair and quite level? How safe are your rugs? Yes No
- 3 Have you got all the electrical flexes and telephone cords tucked well out of the way? Yes No
- 4 Is your furniture placed so that you do not have to reach or lean too far to get things or do tasks? Yes No
- 5 Have you got enough clear space to walk around safely? Yes No
- 6 Can you see well enough to read or write? Are there any dark spots when you move around your room at night? Yes No
- 7 Can you get to your windows without taking risks? Yes No
- 8 Is any open fire well guarded? Yes No

Action Points _____

Bathroom and toilet

Check Points

- 1 Is your bed a good height for you to get in and out of? Yes No
- 2 Does it stay still when you sit on it? Yes No
- 3 Can you switch on a light easily from your bed? Yes No
- 4 Is your floor covering safe and in good repair?
Are rugs flat and stable? Yes No
- 5 Do you manage to sleep the whole night without getting out of bed? Yes No
- 6 Have you got a telephone near your bed, or any means of calling for help if you need it? Yes No
- 7 Is there room to walk without obstacles or clutter? Yes No
- 8 Can you reach your electrical switches and sockets? Yes No
- 9 Can you reach to hang your clothes?
Is your wardrobe stable? Yes No
- 10 Have you recently checked your slippers and shoes to make sure they are in good repair and not slippery? Yes No

Action Points



Section 3

Falls and fracture prevention

Did you know?

1 in 2 women and 1 in 5 men over 50 will have a fracture.

1 in 3 people over 65 will have a fall in any year.

Someone who has one fall is more likely to have other falls.

Someone who has had one fracture is more likely to have another.

Below is a simple questionnaire to help you assess your risk of falls and fractures. Why not complete it before you see your GP or Nurse?

Falls risk factor		Y	N
1	Have you had any falls in the past year?		
2	Do you take 4 or more medications a day?		
3	Have you been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease or Stroke?		
4	Do you have problems with your balance?		
5	Are you <u>unable</u> to rise from a chair of knee height without using your arms?		

Osteoporosis risk factor		Y	N
1	Have you had a previous fracture following a simple fall (fall from a standing height)?		
2	Do you have a family history of osteoporosis? E.g. mother or father had a hip fracture?		
3	Are you currently a smoker?		
4	Have you ever taken steroids for more than three months?		
5	Do you have Rheumatoid Arthritis?		
6	Did you have an early Menopause- before 45yrs?		
7	Do you drink more than 3 or more units of alcohol per day? Unit = 1 glass of beer, single measure of spirits, medium sized glass of wine		

Falls risk factor - more info

Falls are not an inevitable result of getting older. Many can be prevented by simple measures like:

- ✓ Keeping physically active and flexible
- ✓ Eating well and drinking plenty of fluid
- ✓ Making sure your home is warm, free from trip hazards and the stairs and hall are well lit.
- ✓ Having your sight and hearing checked regularly
- ✓ Looking after your feet
- ✓ Wearing well fitting suitable footwear
- ✓ Avoiding trailing clothes (especially nightwear)

It may be helpful for your doctor or pharmacist to review the medications you take, if you take 4 or more different ones each day.

Some people who have already had a fall may need tests to find the cause, and treatment such as special exercises to improve balance and strength.



Osteoporosis risk factor - more info

As we get older our bones become less dense and so more likely to break (fracture).

In some people this process happens earlier and faster than others. This is called Osteoporosis (and is not the same as osteoarthritis)

Fractures caused by relatively minor accidents, such as slips and trips, stumbles and falls from a low or standing height (we call these 'low impact fractures') may be a sign of bones that are becoming less strong.

This makes it important to try to keep bones strong and avoid falling.

- ✓ Taking weight bearing exercise (any exercise when you are in a standing position) will help to protect your bones
- ✓ Stop smoking.
- ✓ Make sure you have plenty of calcium - found in milk, butter, cream, yoghurt, cheese and bony fish like sardines.
- ✓ Try to get out into daylight to help your body produce vitamin D.



If you are at high risk of falling, investigation and treatment can help prevent you falling.

We suggest you go and see your GP or Practice Nurse (taking this leaflet with you) and ask for an assessment of your risk of falls and osteoporosis.



Better balance

Falls are the major cause of disability and the leading cause of mortality due to injury in people over the age of 65 in the UK

There is strong evidence that the number of falls and the negative impact of their consequences can be reduced by up to 30% following:

- A multifactorial falls programme

In Swindon the Falls & Bone Health service has a whole service approach, working across many organisations to provide programmes to help reduce the risk of older people falling again.

The Community Falls and Bone Health Lead

NHS Swindon employs a qualified Health Care professional to co-ordinate the Falls & Bone Health Service within the community.

Falls Avoidance Nurse

The Great Western Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust also employs a qualified Health Care professional to co-ordinate the Falls prevention service within the Great Western Hospital.

The Falls Co-ordinators work with the Community Rehabilitation Team,

Homeline, Residential and Care Homes, the Ambulance service and the people of Swindon who experience a fall.

Medicines and tablets

- If you take four or more medicines daily, there is an increased risk of falling.
- Anti-depressants, sleeping tablets, blood pressure tablets or heart tablets can make you feel dizzy.
- You should have your tablets reviewed by your GP at least every six months, to make sure that they are still suitable for you.
- Take care immediately after using eye drops or ointment as you may have blurred vision.
- Alcohol may react with your medicines and cause side effects.
- Talk to your GP before you stop taking any prescribed medicines.
- If you need help to collect prescriptions or take your tablets, contact your GP or local pharmacist.

Advice to reduce the risk of falls around the home:-

- ✓ Keep stairs, landing, hallways and walkways **free of clutter**.
- ✓ **Mark** the **edges** of the **stairs** so that they are very easily seen.
- ✓ Keep the **stairs** and **landing well lit** using high wattage bulbs.
- ✓ Always switch the **light on** when walking around at **night**.
- ✓ **Replace** any **worn**, loose or frayed **carpet** and **rugs**. If you decide to use mats then ensure they are non-slip.
- ✓ Hard floors are very slippery when wet; **wipe up** any spillages in the kitchen or bathroom **immediately**.
- ✓ Don't stretch for items just out of reach - **move closer or ask for help**.
- ✓ Can you safely **reach** your **electrical switches** and **sockets**?
- ✓ Can you pick up your deliveries (post, papers, milk) quite easily?
- ✓ **Avoid bending** to **cupboards** or the floor.
- ✓ **Avoid trailing** bedding or **clothing**.
- ✓ **Pace yourself**, take plenty of time.
- ✓ Don't take chances, **avoid risks**.
- ✓ **Know** your **capabilities**.

Choosing a Balanced Diet

- All foods can be enjoyed as part of a healthy balanced diet
- It is important to eat a variety of foods to get the right balance
- Eat regularly through the day

The eatwell plate

Use the eatwell plate to help you get the balance right. It shows how much of what you eat should come from each food group.



Fruit and vegetables

Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods



Fruit and Vegetables

- Good source of vitamins and minerals.
- Have a good serving at each meal
- Aim for 5 portions a day

Meat, Fish, Eggs, Beans (non-dairy protein)

- Good sources of protein
- Eat 2 of these foods a day
- Choose lower fat options when possible

Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein

Foods and drinks high in fat and/or sugar

Milk and dairy foods

Fatty and Sugary Foods

These foods are less nutritious, so eat less of these small amounts

Bread, Cereals, Rice,

- Potatoes, Pasta and other Starchy Foods
- These foods are rich in carbohydrate, vitamins and fibre
- Have a serving at each meal
- Choose wholemeal/wholewheat varieties

Milk and Dairy Foods

- Rich in calcium and protein
- Have 2-3 servings a day
- Choose lower fat alternatives (semi-skimmed milk)
- One serving: 1/3 pint milk, 125g pot yoghurt, slice cheese (30g)

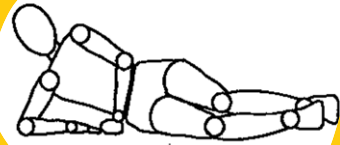
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What to do if you have a fall...

Keep calm, lie still, check that you are not hurt

If you are not hurt:

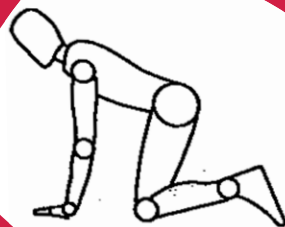
Roll onto your side.



Push up with your hands...



..onto your knees and crawl to a sturdy piece of furniture (if you are unable to crawl, then shuffle on your bottom).



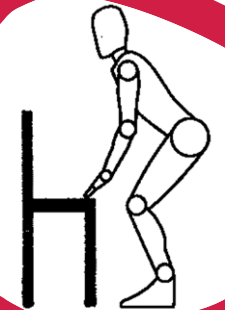
Put your hands on to the sturdy piece of furniture



Bring your stronger leg up, bending your knee and placing your foot flat on the floor.



Lean forwards, push up and bring your other foot up so it is also flat on the floor.



Turn and sit on the furniture.
Have a rest before you try to stand up.

Let your GP know that you have had a fall.

If you are hurt



Attract attention

- press your pendant alarm
- shout and bang something
- use the telephone if you can

Get comfortable/keep warm

- use clothing, a tablecloth, rug or pillow

Keep moving

- to avoid pressure sores or stiffness
- to help circulation floor;
- if your bladder “lets go” while you are on the floor, move away from the damp area

Keep calm

Equipment

Sometimes a piece of equipment may help you to be independent & reduce your risk of falling. Such items may include:

- Raised toilet seat
- Grab rails in bathroom
- Grab rail at front or back door
- Bath/Shower seat
- Walking stick or frame
- Trolley



To obtain this equipment you will need an assessment by an Occupational Therapist.

You should either:

- Talk to your doctor who can make a referral
- Ring Careline on 0800 085 6666

Exercise - interesting facts

It's never too late!

In fact, those with a sedentary lifestyle are likely to feel the health benefits of physical activity more quickly than those with an active lifestyle. Research has shown that high-resistance weight training can lead to significant gains in muscle strength, size, and functional mobility, even among frail residents of nursing homes up to 96 years of age – in some cases, this improvement was equivalent to 20 years.

We're not doing enough

Only 17% of men and 13% of women over the age of 65 are achieving the recommended level of physical activity as set out by the Chief Medical Officer. In addition, 45% of adults over the age of 70 years take a 20-minute walk less than once per year or never.

Physical activity recommendations

Older adults should aim to achieve 150 mins of physical activity a week. This could be in five blocks of 30 mins, 10 mins or even shorter periods for those who are less able. Aim to build up to the full amount gradually. Additional components of strength and balance exercise are essential to keep healthy and reduce falls.



Muscle strength is vital to perform daily activity

This includes getting out of the bath or chair. With inactivity, muscle quickly wastes away; after only two weeks in bed recovering from illness, we can lose 1–2 per cent of bone density and up to 20% of our strength. Specific programmes for strength and balance have been shown to reduce the risk of falls by as much as 60%.



Exercise stimulates the production of growth hormone.

This helps to maintain muscle and bone and is particularly important for those who have, or are at risk of, osteoporosis; bone density can be maintained only by weight-bearing exercise.

For more facts and research on physical activity in older adults, visit the British Heart Foundation National Centre website: www.bhfactive.org.uk

General health concerns

- ✓ Have your eyesight checked annually by an optician.
- ✓ Have your blood pressure checked regularly.
- ✓ If you feel dizzy when you stand up it may be related to your blood pressure - speak to your GP.
- ✓ Have your hearing checked regularly.
- ✓ If you have problems with your bladder; or difficulty getting to the toilet, let your GP know.
- ✓ Smoking is a risk factor for osteoporosis.



Osteoporosis ...

..affects people of all ages, but is particularly common after the age of 50. More than 1 in 3 women and 1 in 12 men in the UK break bones due to osteoporosis.

What is Osteoporosis?

Literally means “porous bones”. The side effects of having porous bones is that they can break without too much force. The most common bones to break are wrists, hips and spines.

The following symptoms may indicate problems:

- A broken bone after a minor fall
- Loss of height
- Unexplained back pain

Dehydration

Lack of water intake - has been identified as a critical risk factor for falls in older people. This is because it can lead to deterioration in mental state & an increase in the likelihood of dizziness & fainting.

Avoid dehydration & benefit from drinking more water. It has been established that people drinking a equate levels of water will benefit in a number of ways:

- Helps avoid chronic constipation
- Maintains a healthy urinary tract
- Reduces the risk of kidney stones
- May reduce the risk of coronary heart disease & blood clots
- Stabilises blood pressure & prevents fainting
- Lowers risk of diabetes
- Improves mental performance
- Helps with falls avoidance
- Keeps skin healthy & young looking
- Generally, makes you feel livelier all over!



Telecare

Telecare consists of equipment and services that support your safety & independence in your own home. The equipment can sense risks such as smoke, floods, gas & it can remind you to take pills & even call for help if you fall.



A help centre can be contacted automatically if any of these problems occur in your home. If needed the help centre can arrange for someone to come to your home or can contact your family, doctor or emergency service.

The system can also warn you by sending an alarm, flashing lights or a vibrating box that can be kept in your pocket or under your pillow.

Footwear

Flat, well-supporting, well-fitting footwear is essential.


Laced, thin-soled shoes with a moderate non-slip heel are recommended.

High heels, sandals, sling-backs or even slippers are not advised; they may all contribute to a trip.



What happens after a fall





This information about **'Helping you to reduce the risk of falling in your home'** is available on the internet at www.swindon.gov.uk. It can be produced in a range of languages and formats (such as large print, Braille or other accessible formats) by contacting the Customer Services Department.

Tel: 01793 445500, Fax: 01793 463331 or E-mail: customerservices@swindon.gov.uk

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