

TAKE CONTROL REDUCE YOUR RISK OF FALLS



Cúram Sláinte Pobail Thoir

Cill Mhantáin | Baile Átha Cliath Theas |
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Community Healthcare East

Wicklow | Dublin South | Dublin South East

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INTRODUCTION

As we get older, we are more at risk of falling.

Let's take a look at how we can **help prevent falls**.

ARE YOU AT RISK OF FALLS?

Key questions to ask yourself, family member or neighbour you may have concerns about:

- Have you had a fall within the last 12 months?
- Do you feel unsteady when walking or standing?
- Are you concerned or worried about falling?



If **YES** to any question, this booklet will provide you with information and advice on preventing falls.

FALL-PROOF YOUR HOME



Many slips, trips and falls happen in or around the home.

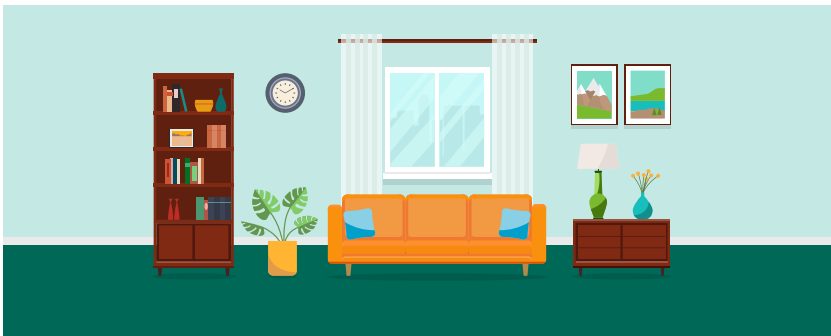
Take a moment to look around to make your home a safer place.

Is the entrance and exit to your home safe and in good condition?

Check for loose paving, obstacles and outdoor overgrowth.

**Are rooms and walkways clear from clutter?
Can you walk around your home easily?**

Secure and remove any trip hazards such as rugs, flexes or trailing bed clothes.



FALL-PROOF YOUR HOME



BEDROOM

Can you move around your bedroom easily?

Keep clutter free. Check bed height - is it easy to get in and out of? Have lighting accessible for night-time toilet trips. Ensure access to a phone and your walking aid is in easy reach if required.

BATHROOM

Are there non-slip mats in the bathroom and grab rails if needed?

Is the toilet high enough to get up from easily?

Is the bathroom near your bedroom for ease of access at night?



Local Authority grants are available to future proof your home including installing a level access shower room, an accessible front door and improving stair safety. Contact your local authority for an application form.

FALL-PROOF YOUR HOME




KITCHEN

Clean up spills and keep frequently used items within easy reach.

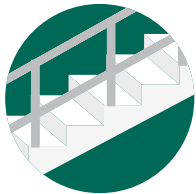
Avoid climbing on chairs or steps. Aim to work between shoulder and knee height.



Is there adequate lighting in the home?

-  Make sure you use correct wattage depending on the room.
-  Add outside lighting if you store anything in the garden or go outside at night.
-  Consider motion sensor lighting for night time toilet trips.

Are your stairs safe?



Ensure handrails are safe and secure.
Repair any loose flooring (carpet, steps).

Are there pets in the house?



A collar with a bell helps to ensure that you know where they are and can hear them coming towards you.

PERSONAL SAFETY AT HOME

At home, there may be times you fall or are fearful of falling. Consider using a pendant alarm, it will enable you to alert someone immediately if you need help.

What is a pendant alarm?

A watch or pendant worn all day/night that gives immediate access to help in case of an emergency such as a fall.

How can I get one?

Pobal Senior Alert Scheme is available to those over 65 who live alone / are alone for long periods. Contact 01 511 7222 for your local distributor. They will provide FREE installation and FREE monitoring for the first year.



How does it work?

It connects to a person in a monitoring centre that directly links you with your named contact.

Have one already? Test it out regularly

TOP TIP - Pendant alarms can be worn at bedtime and most are waterproof for showering.

STAY STEADY, STAY STRONG



We lose muscle mass as we age. This can affect our strength and ability to balance. Feeling unsteady when standing or walking can increase our risk of having a fall.

What can I do?

- Be active for at least 30 minutes most days of the week, such as: walking, gardening, dancing, swimming.
- Ageing muscle responds to exercise, especially resistance exercise. Complete the exercises in this booklet at least twice a week to improve strength and balance.
- Eating a protein source within 30 minutes of exercise can help to replenish your energy and rebuild muscle.

Check out local strength and balance programmes and/or walking groups, e.g. Walk and Talk (see pg 25).

STAY STEADY, STAY STRONG

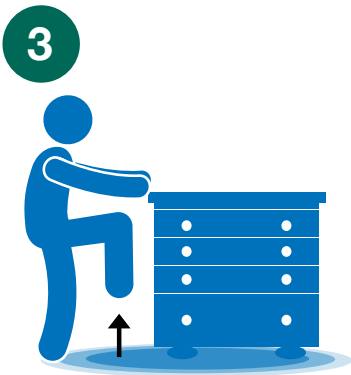
6 EXERCISES FOR STRENGTH AND BALANCE



Sit to Stand: Place feet firmly on the ground and stand up out of the chair (use arms if required for support). Repeat 10 times.



Heel Raises: Rest your hands on a stable surface for support. Lift your heels off the floor. Hold for 3 seconds. Repeat 10 times.



High Knees: Rest your hands on a stable surface for support. Lift one knee at a time as high as possible. Hold for 3 seconds. Repeat 10 times.

STAY STEADY, STAY STRONG

6 EXERCISES FOR STRENGTH AND BALANCE

4



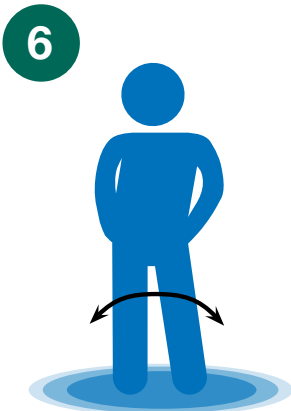
Hip extension: Rest your hands on a stable surface. Move your leg backwards, keeping it straight. Hold for 3 seconds. Repeat 10 times on each leg.

5



Side Leg: Rest your hands on a stable surface for support. Move your leg out to the side, keeping it straight. Hold for 3 seconds. Repeat 10 times on each leg.

6

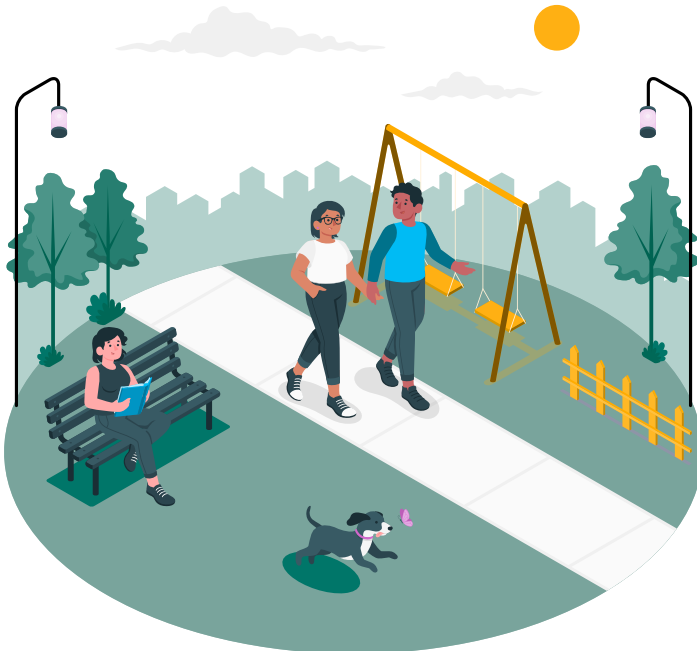


Weight shift: Standing with feet hip width apart, hands resting on a surface if required. Slowly shift your weight on to your right foot and then slowly onto your left foot. Keep both feet on the ground. Repeat 10 times.

STAY SAFE WHILE OUT AND ABOUT

Continue to enjoy your outdoor activities, let's just take some care.

- Scan the area for trip hazards.
- Look out for cracked pavements, obstacles, and uneven surfaces.
- Wear footwear that suits the activity.
- Walk at your own comfortable pace.
- If out and about at night, try and stick to well-lit areas.
- If recommended, use your walking aid.
- Bring your phone.



LOOK AFTER YOUR BONES

As we get older, our bones become thinner.

Keeping your bones strong will reduce your chance of breaking a bone if you fall.



LIFESTYLE RISK FACTORS FOR BONE HEALTH

Smoking is associated with an increased risk of bone loss and hip fracture. Stopping helps prevent further bone loss. www.quit.ie

Lack of exercise (see pages 10 and 11) – weight bearing exercises help new bone to form.

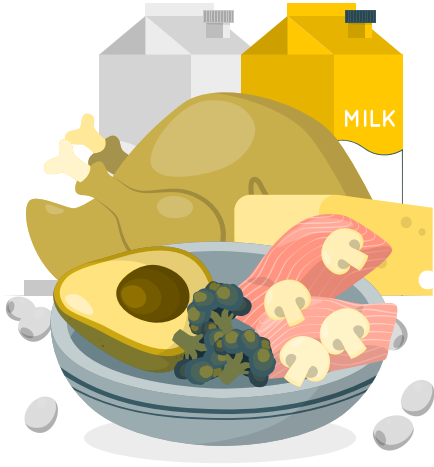
Certain **medication** and medical conditions affect bone health (ask your GP).

High alcohol use decreases bone strength. www.drinkaware.ie

Too much caffeine affects bone health.

LOOK AFTER YOUR BONES

GOOD NUTRITION FOR HEALTHY BONES



GET VITAMIN D

Helps our body absorb calcium.

Sources include eggs, oily fish, Vit D fortified milk and cereals and sun exposure.

Did you know it is recommended that all adults over 65 should take a Vit D supplement of 15µg per day.

ADD CALCIUM

Calcium helps to maintain bone strength and prevent bone loss from ageing.

Sources include milk, yogurt, cheese, spinach, tofu and calcium enriched milk.

PROTEIN POWER

Protein helps to build, repair and maintain muscle mass.

Sources include meat, poultry, fish, eggs, milk, cheese, beans and nuts.

LOOK AFTER YOUR BONES

FOOD BALANCE

Following the food pyramid will help achieve a healthy balanced diet.

The **Food Pyramid**

For older adults

Foods and drinks high in fat, sugar and salt

NOT every day

Fats, spreads and oils

In very small amounts

Meat, poultry, fish, eggs, beans and nuts

2-3 servings a day

Milk, yogurt and cheese

3-4 servings a day

Wholemeal cereals and breads, potatoes, pasta and rice

3-5 servings a day

Vegetables, salad and fruit

5-7 servings a day

If your appetite is reduced, try to eat smaller meals with snacks in between to ensure your getting adequate nutrients to protect your bones.

HEALTHY FEET



Poorly fitting footwear can increase your risk of falls.

Ensure your footwear fits well, fastens securely (Velcro or elastic shoe laces), has a roomy toe box, flexible non-slip sole and good ankle/heel support.

- If prone to swelling consider shoes with Velcro strap.
- Wear appropriate footwear for the activity you are doing.
- Avoid backless slippers or walking in socks around the house.

Check your feet regularly.



You may be eligible for a partly funded Chiropody card for routine care. Contact your GP, they may also refer you to your local Podiatry service if more specialist care is required

MEDICATION ADVICE

Did you know your risk of falling may be increased if you are taking five or more medications?

As we get older, we are more likely to be prescribed medications for different health conditions.

A “Blister Pack” helps prevent errors/mistakes.

Dizziness, drowsiness and/or drops in blood pressure can occur with certain medication.

Talk to your GP and ask to review your medication if you are experiencing any of these problems - they may also check your blood pressure.



Alcohol may interact with prescribed medication, which could increase your risk of falls.

TOILET TIPS

Do you need frequent trips to the toilet at night?

- Check that the path to the toilet is free of hazards.
- Give yourself plenty of time, don't rush.
- Ensure adequate lighting and consider motion sensor lighting.
- If you require a walking aid, ensure it is within easy reach.
- It is important to continue to drink adequate fluids in the day - avoid limiting your water intake.



Consider discussing further management with your healthcare provider, e.g. equipment such as a commode and/or medication options.

HEARING AND VISION

VISION



Poor vision can often lead us to trip and fall. Some eye conditions increase with age and early detection is important.

Get your eyesight checked regularly.

Wearing bi-focals or vari-focals may alter your perception of steps and stairs.

HEARING

Risk of hearing loss increases with age.

Our ears allow us to hear by picking up sound waves.

Our inner ear supports our sense of balance and feeling steady.

If you wear a hearing aid, ensure it works well and have spare batteries .



Get your hearing checked regularly.

If you notice a change in your vision or hearing affecting your day to day living, talk to your GP, you may be eligible to a free eye test, hearing test and/ or prescription if required.

CONCERNED ABOUT FALLING?

Having fears about falling are very common, even if we have not fallen before.



After a fall we can feel shaken, more cautious, and vulnerable.

Worrying about falling can prevent us having an active and fulfilling life.

Learning to cope with these feelings can help improve our confidence and quality of life.

What can I do?

- Talk to someone about your fears and anxiety (friends, family and/or health professional).
- Take action to reduce your risk.
- Challenge any negative talks.
- Practice relaxation techniques.

REPORTING A FALL

It is common to have many feelings after experiencing a fall

- embarrassed
- upset
- fearful of falling again
- worried about losing independence



Most falls do not result in serious injury, however, signs of injury may not always be apparent immediately.

It is recommended that ALL falls are reported and ensure that you let your healthcare provider know if you

- Hit your head
- Have pain
- Loss of consciousness
- On anti-coagulant medication
- Not feeling yourself

If you have a fall, tell someone.

Keep important emergency phone numbers in or near your phone in LARGE PRINT.

GETTING UP FROM A FALL

- **Keep calm.**
- **Check your body.**
- **If you are injured, call for help. Stay warm.**
- **If you are not hurt and think you can get up, follow these steps:**

1



Roll on to your side, then push up on to your elbows.

2



Use your arms to push yourself on to your hands and knees.

3



Crawl to a very stable piece of furniture (a sturdy chair or bed) and hold on to it for support.

GETTING UP FROM A FALL

4



Slide or raise the foot of your stronger leg forwards so it is flat on the floor.

5



Lean forwards and push up using your arms and front leg, slowly rising to a standing position.

6



Turn around and sit down.
Sit for a minute or two to rest.

**Let your healthcare provider know
if you have had a fall.**

HELP PREVENT OTHER PEOPLE FROM FALLING

We can take positive steps to prevent falls in people we care for.

“Are you concerned about falling? Would you like to chat about it? ”

Spot their risk factors

Has their vision changed?

Suggest an eye test

Are they dizzy?

Suggest discussing with GP their medication and blood pressure status.

Are they unsteady when standing or walking?

Suggest physiotherapy.

Encourage them to talk to their GP about managing any fears and medical concerns.

Give them a copy of this booklet and encourage them to carry out the actions recommended.

USEFUL LINKS

Age & Opportunity:

Call 01 8057709 or visit www.ageandopportunity.ie

Age Action:

Care and Repair - Call 01 4756989 or visit www.ageaction.ie

ALONE

Support & Befriending service - Call 0818 222 024

Alzheimers Society of Ireland

Call 1800 341341 or visit www.alzheimers.ie

Carer's Association:

Call 1800 250724 or visit www.carersireland.com

Eye Health - Vision

www.citizensinformation.ie/en/health/health-services/dental-audal-and-optical-services/sight-tests-and-eye-health/

Hearing - HSE Audiology

www2.hse.ie/services/audiology/services-supports/

HSE Live

Call 1800 700 700 for general enquiries or visit www.hse.ie

Irish Nutrition & Dietetics Institute:

www.indi.ie www.gov.ie/healthyeatingover65

Living Well – self management programs

www2.hse.ie/living-well

Making Connections / Walk and Talk group

Call 01 2951053 or visit www.makingconnections.ie.

Medication

My medicines List www.safermeds.ie

Osteoporosis:

Call 1890 252751 or visit www.irishosteoporosis.ie/information-support/fall-prevention/

Pobal Senior Alert Scheme:

Call 01-5117222 or visit [//www.pobal.ie/programmes/seniors-alert-scheme-sas/](http://www.pobal.ie/programmes/seniors-alert-scheme-sas/)

Social Prescribing:

Community connection www.allirelandsocialprescribing.ie

Strength - Balance & Better Bones programmes

- **Local Health Centre** – call to check availability
- **Siel Bleu:** Call 01 2096889 www.sielbleu.ie
- **ExWell Medical:** Call 01 83395651 www.exwell.ie

Acknowledgements:

CHEast Older Persons Services

CHEast Primary Care



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