

## FALLS

### How to avoid them and how to cope

#### 15 WAYS TO HELP PREVENT FALLS

1. Take regular exercise to keep muscles strong and joints supple.
2. Fit handrails on both sides of the stairs.
3. Keep stairs and living areas well lit and keep a lamp or torch by the bed.
4. Never leave objects that may be tripped over on stairs or walking areas; avoid having cables or flexes crossing walking areas.
5. Use a non-slip rubber mat in the bath or shower; fit a handrail near toilet.
6. Replace worn rugs and carpets, using non-slip types; tape down the edges of rugs to avoid slips and trips.
7. Avoid bending or climbing; keep much-used items at an easily-reached level. Have a letter tray on your letterbox to save bending for mail.
8. If you must climb, use proper steps – never use chairs, stools or tables.
9. Get up from chairs and beds slowly – your blood pressure falls as you get up and you may feel dizzy unless you allow time to adjust.
10. Don't rush, for example to answer the phone or door. It may be a good idea to have a mobile or cordless phone to keep by you.
11. Avoid poorly fitting shoes or slippers or high heels; don't walk in socks or tights on slippery floors.
12. Avoid ill-fitting or trailing clothes which may trip you up.
13. Keep your home warm (cold muscles can lead to falls) and salt external paths in winter.
14. If prescribed medicine is making you dizzy, **don't** stop taking it but consult your GP. Review your medication with your GP regularly.
15. Have regular eye tests.

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE A FALL

**Don't panic:** you may feel a little shocked and shaken but try to stay calm – it will help you to gather your thoughts and remember what to do.

### **Assess your situation:**

- if you are hurt and unable to get up, follow the **REST AND WAIT** plan.
- if you are unhurt, and sure you can get up, follow the **UP AND ABOUT** plan.

**See your GP:** any fall could be serious for your health and you should go to see your GP as soon as possible afterwards.

### **REST AND WAIT**

- **Try to summon help:** use your pendant alarm if you have one, bang on the wall, call out for help or, if you can, crawl to a telephone and call 999.
- **Move to a soft surface:** if you are on a hard floor, try to move to a carpeted area if you can.
- **Keep warm:** try to reach for something warm, like a dressing gown or blanket, to put over you and try to move out of draughts.
- **Keep moving:** try to roll from side to side and move your arms and legs regularly to avoid sores and keep comfortable – change your position every half-hour or so while you wait for help.

### **UP AND ABOUT**

- **Don't get up quickly** – first roll on to your hands and knees and look for a stable piece of furniture such as a chair or bed.
- **Crawl** over to the furniture and, if possible, place something soft under your knees.
- **Hold on** to the furniture with your hands, and place one foot flat on the floor, with your knee bent in front of your body.
- **When you are ready** put your other foot flat on the floor as well, leaning forwards to push on your feet and hands until you bring the second foot to beside the first.
- **Sit down and rest** for a while before getting up.
- **Remember** to make an appointment with your GP as soon as you can.