

How to Stay On Your Feet[®]

Checklist



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An electronic version of this document is available at
www.health.qld.gov.au/stayonyourfeet

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Stay active, stay independent and Stay On Your Feet®

This checklist is designed to help you to stay active and independent and live in your own home for longer.

Falls are one of the main reasons that older people are admitted to hospital or need to move to a higher level of care, such as a nursing home. However, falls are not an inevitable part of the ageing process. You can help reduce your risk of falling by:

- › knowing the risk factors for falling
- › taking action to stay healthy and active
- › creating a safe environment in and around your home.

This checklist is Queensland Health's information and suggestions based on the latest research to help you manage your health and lifestyle, as well as make your home safer. It will help you Stay On Your Feet®.

The checklist covers information on wellbeing, nutrition, physical activity and health conditions experienced by people as they get older. It also includes information on the most common types of hazards found in and around the home. While some hazards may not be a problem now, they could become a problem in the future.

How to use this checklist





















Make some time to either go through the checklist yourself or sit with a friend or helper and discuss the checklist together. The whole checklist does not have to be completed at once and you may like to break it up into sections. For example, you could start with the health section first and later move to the section about safety in and around the home.

Complete the checklist by ticking **yes** or **no** in the circle next to the statements. If you answer **yes** to any statement, this indicates that you will need to make changes in this area. If you answer **yes** to a statement about health and wellbeing, talk to your doctor or health professional about these areas.

Each section is marked by a symbol that indicates the type of issue it addresses.

This checklist should be completed about once a year to make sure that you are familiar with any risk factors if your situation changes.

There is an extensive list of useful government and community organisations and their contact details provided as an appendix to this checklist.

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-  Foot care
-  Footwear
-  Vision
-  Strong bones, muscles and healthy eating
-  Contenance
-  Inside the home
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-  Kitchen
-  Lounge room or living room
-  Floors, walkways and stairs
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-  Personal alarms and walking aids
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strength



balance



health



safety



independence



Stay active and stay independent

Our bodies are designed to be used and this becomes even more important as we get older. Being physically active is essential for health and wellbeing and will also help you to stay independent.

Stay independent by being active and improving your strength and balance.

Essential elements of physical activity include strength, balance and reflexes. While age can affect your strength and balance, this can be improved by regular exercise on most days of the week. It's never too late to start.

To improve your level of physical activity, get professional help to design a program specific to your needs. If you have been inactive for a while, or have a health condition, check with your doctor before you begin.

How active are you?

I do less than 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on most days of the week

Yes No

Moderate physical activity increases your heart rate and breathing and may include sporting activities, brisk walking, swimming, cycling or group exercise.

If you answered 'Yes'

For overall health and wellbeing, it is advisable to do at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on most days of the week – preferably every day. This can be split into three lots of ten minutes.

How steady are you?

I do less than two sessions of balance and strength exercises per week

Yes No

Balance and strength exercises could include Tai Chi, yoga, dancing or a specific program provided by a health or exercise professional.

If you answered 'Yes'

Balance exercises have been shown to be vital to reduce falls, so try to include balance and strength exercises in your physical activity routine at least twice a week. You could attend a Tai Chi or yoga class or obtain professionally prescribed exercises from a physiotherapist or exercise physiologist.

I feel unsteady when walking or I become unsteady when I turn around

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Talk to your doctor about what might cause you to feel unsteady. You can have a balance assessment to help identify the cause/s of your unsteadiness. You can ask your health professional to suggest exercises that will strengthen your thigh and bottom muscles and improve your balance.

I find it difficult to get up from a chair

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

This can be a sign of decreased leg muscle strength. Talk to a health professional about exercises that strengthen leg muscles. Ask if you need a more detailed assessment.

Do you have a plan for your physical activity?

I have not discussed physical activity with a health professional in the last 12 months

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

It is advisable for older adults to:

- › discuss physical activity with a health professional at least once a year
- › have a plan for physical activity which aims to improve your strength and balance and is tailored to suit you – use the Ageing and Vitality Guide and Workbook. This plan should aim to increase your level of activity gradually over time.

Tips to improve strength and balance to stay independent

- › Choose activities that reduce the risk of falling by helping to improve strength and balance. Ideal activities are group exercise programs that include strength and balance, such as Tai Chi, yoga or a program that best suits your needs designed by a health or exercise professional.
- › Discuss a tailored physical activity plan with your health professional every year. This plan outlines your intended level of physical activity and how this will be achieved.
- › To be effective, your physical activity needs to gradually become more challenging. Be active on most days of the week and include balance exercises at least twice every week.
- › Consider what shoes are appropriate for the activities you do (for further information, see footwear section on page 11).

Who can help?

- › Doctor
- › Exercise physiologist
- › Fitness instructors
- › General practice nurse
- › Occupational therapist
- › Physiotherapist

What physical activity options are available?

There may already be activities available in your local area. You can find out about these activities by contacting your local council. For example, some programs operating in parts of Queensland include:

- › Tai Chi/Tai Chi for Arthritis
- › Steady Steps
- › Older and Bolder
- › 60 and Better
- › Yoga.

Many more activity options are available and can be found on the Parks and Forest, Department of Environment and Science website and 60 and Better Program (details available on page 38–39).

My Aged Care and Carer Gateway provide free and confidential information on community aged care, disability and other support services across Australia (details available on page 38).

For further information on how to Stay On Your Feet[®], visit:

- › Queensland Stay on Your Feet[®] at: www.health.qld.gov.au/stayonyourfeet

I plan to take action by...

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Health conditions

Many health conditions can increase your risk of falling, especially anything that reduces your level of activity or makes you feel unsteady on your feet. Work with your health professional to develop a management plan that suits you and helps you to manage any health conditions that increase your day-to-day risk of falls.

**Take action to manage and maintain your health –
develop a plan with your health professionals.**

Do you have a health condition that could increase your risk of falling?

I have been diagnosed with a health condition, such as diabetes, stroke, arthritis, Parkinson's disease, depression, dementia or a heart condition Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

- › Have a regular check up with your doctor and/or health professional.
- › Learn as much as you can about your condition by talking to your doctor or a health professional. Ask them for relevant and reliable brochures, information booklets, websites and contact details for a support group.
- › Seek early treatment if your symptoms change.

I experience feelings of dizziness or light-headedness Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

If you are dizzy or light-headed, visit your doctor to discuss your symptoms.

I experience problems with my bladder or bowel Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Incontinence is a common problem that can be addressed with the correct treatment. There are many ways to manage bladder or bowel problems depending on the type of problem you have. The first thing to do is to see your doctor to have a continence assessment. After this your doctor or continence assessor will develop a management plan with you. With help, you can manage incontinence and resume a healthy active lifestyle. Refer to the continence section (pages 22 to 24).

I find it hard to hear Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Hearing loss is a common chronic condition. People with mild hearing loss are more likely to have a history of falling than people with normal hearing. Have your hearing tested and wear your hearing aids, talk with your health professional if any further hearing tests are needed.

Have you lost your confidence because of worrying about falling?

I have had a trip, slip, stumble or fall in the last six months (even if it did not cause an injury) Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

A previous fall, even a minor one, increases your chances of having a more serious fall in the future. Falls are preventable, so take action and see if you can work out why you fell. Complete this checklist and talk about any 'yes' responses with your doctor or health professional.

I limit my daily activities because I worry about falling Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Worrying about falling is common, particularly after a previous fall. After a fall, many people try and reduce their activity so they do not fall again. However, if you limit your activity then this reduces muscle strength, mobility and social contact – all of which increases your falls risk.

Talk to your doctor or health professional if you have concerns about falling or can't go about your normal daily activities.

Tips to manage your health

- › Work with your doctor or other health professionals to develop an understandable and achievable personal health care plan.
- › Be aware that your state of mind can contribute to your risk of falling.

Who can help?

- › Doctor
- › Specialist
- › General practice or community nurse
- › Physiotherapist
- › Psychologist
- › Occupational therapist
- › Support group (e.g. arthritis support group)

Further information on support groups in your area is available from 13 HEALTH and My Aged Care and Carer Gateway (further information available on pages 38 to 39).

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Medicines

Medicines include those prescribed by a doctor and those bought from a pharmacy, supermarket or health food store. They also include natural or complementary products. Taking certain types of medicines, or a combination of medicines, can have side effects that can make you dizzy or drowsy which can increase your risk of falls.

Manage your medicines safely and effectively and have them reviewed annually.

Do you know enough about your medicines and any possible side effects?

I take medications that can affect mental alertness or cause dizziness or drowsiness

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about the type and quantity of your medicines and regularly ask them to review your medicines. This is especially important if you are experiencing side effects of medicines, feel at all unsteady on your feet, or if you have fallen over recently.

Consider talking with your doctor about alternative remedies to help you get a good night's sleep. Some people get more sensitive to sleeping tablets as they get older and so experience more side effects from these medicines. These side effects can include confusion and unsteadiness which can increase the risk of falling.

I have trouble remembering all of my medicines and what they are for

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Keep a list of ALL your medicines, even ones that you have purchased at the supermarket, from a health food shop or any other 'natural' medicines you may be taking at the moment. Your doctor or pharmacist can print a list of your prescribed medications which includes the strength, dose and directions for these medicines. Take this list to any appointments with doctors or other health professionals.

I forget to take my prescribed medicine correctly (e.g. at the right time of day, with or without food)

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Talk to your pharmacist if you are unsure about your medicines or if you are unsure if you are taking them correctly – this may help limit any side effects.

Do you store your medicines correctly?

I tend to remove my medicines from their original containers

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

To make sure you are taking your medicines correctly, leave them all in their original containers, or have them packed into a medicines organiser, such as a Webster-Pak® (as pictured right) or dosette box.



Do you have your medicines reviewed regularly?

During a doctor's appointment, there never seems enough time to discuss all my medicines with my doctor (including things that are not prescribed, like vitamins)

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

It can be useful to make an appointment with your doctor just to review all your medicines, vitamins, herbals and non-prescribed medicines. It would be helpful to either bring all your medicines with you or take your up-to-date list of medicines to this appointment.

I have not had my medication reviewed in the last 12 months

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

To make sure you are receiving the most up-to-date treatment, and to avoid taking any unnecessary medicines, have your doctor review your medicines once a year. This is important as your health conditions can change, different medicines may come onto the market, and new research about treatments may become available.

Tips to help with managing medicines so they are safe and effective

- › Make an appointment to see your doctor if you:
 - › take medicines that affect mental alertness or cause dizziness or drowsiness
 - › have fallen over in the last 12 months
 - › feel at all unsteady on your feet
 - › have concerns about falling.
- › Have your medicines checked
 - › Ask your doctor or pharmacist to arrange a Home Medicines Review. This means a specially trained pharmacist visits you at home to discuss and review all your medicines. You will not have to pay for this service. If this service is not available in your area, contact the Medicine Line (Phone 1300 633 424, 1300 MEDICINE, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm AEST).
 - › Some side effects from your medicines can increase your risk of falling. If a medicine makes you dizzy, unsteady or drowsy, check with your doctor if there is a different medicine that is just as effective but without those side effects.
- › Seek further information
 - › Most medicines have consumer information on the label or in the packet. You can also ask your pharmacist for a copy of the Consumer Medicine Information leaflet, which contains easy to understand information about each of your medicines.
- › Check the label on your medicines – there may be a warning that the medicine may cause dizziness or that it should not be taken with alcohol.
- › Do not use other people’s medicine.
- › Check the tools and tips for consumers on the NPS MedicineWise website (further details available on page 40).

Who can help?

- › Doctor
- › Pharmacist
- › NPS MedicineWise (further information available on page 40).

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Foot care

If your feet are sore, aching or tired, it makes it difficult to stay active and independent. Foot problems and foot pain are not a natural part of the ageing process. Some foot problems can be the first sign of more serious medical conditions, such as diabetes, circulation or nerve conditions. These problems may require treatment from a podiatrist or other health professionals.

Take care of your feet each day and have regular podiatry checks.

Do you have healthy feet?

I have not had my feet checked by a podiatrist in the last 12 months Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Visit the podiatrist annually to keep your feet in their best shape.

I have ingrown toenails or painful feet and ankles Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Ingrown toenails or painful feet and ankles can change the way you walk and can increase your risk of falling. If you have painful feet or other foot problems, seek help from a podiatrist or health professional.

Tips to help with foot care

If you have problems with your feet, visit your doctor or podiatrist at the first signs of redness, swelling or infection in the feet, as they can help you to treat and prevent foot problems. Make sure that you look after your feet by undertaking daily foot care.

- › Check feet daily for dry or cracked skin, blisters, sores and changes in colour.
- › Foot exercises, such as walking barefoot in the sand, can help to strengthen your toes and improve the condition of your feet. Ask your podiatrist for additional foot exercises.
- › Use toenail clippers to cut toe nails. Trim them straight across, do not round off the corners and cut them no longer than the tip of the toes. If you cannot cut your own toenails, seek assistance from a podiatrist.

Who can help?

- › Doctor
- › Podiatrists – Information on the Australasian Podiatry Association can be found on page 39.

For further information about services in your local area, contact:

- › My Aged Care and Carer Gateway (further information available on page 38).

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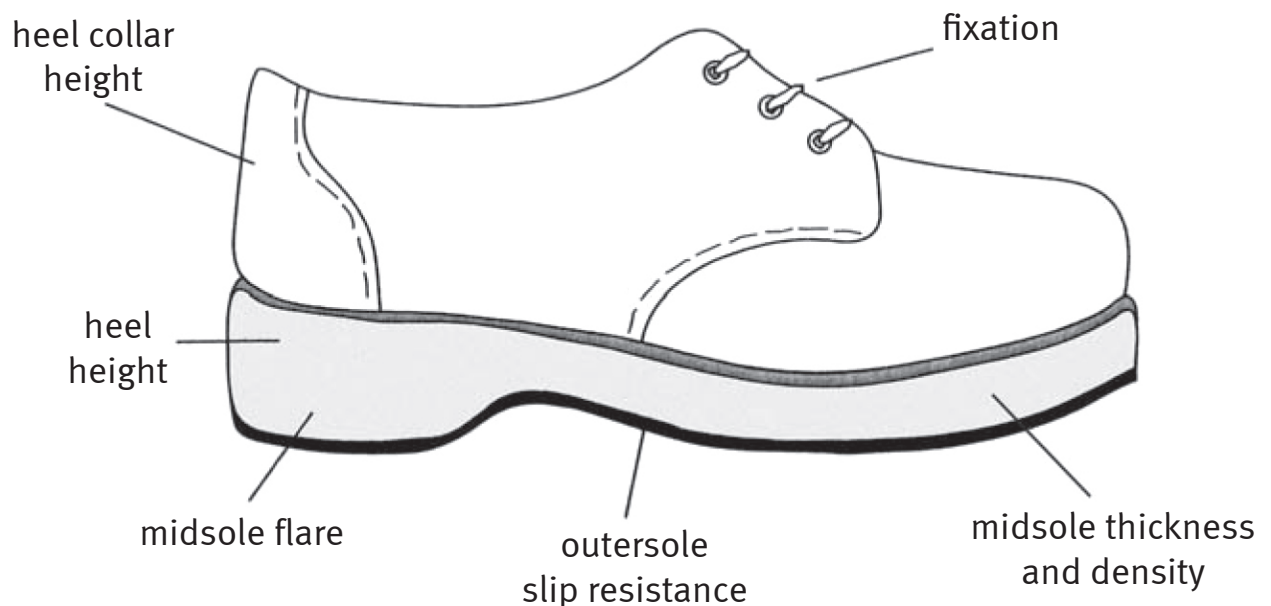
Footwear

Some types of footwear can increase your risk of falls by making you trip, slip or stumble.

Choose and wear shoes that are appropriate for your feet and suit the activities you do.

Consider shoes that will help you to Stay On Your Feet®. Your shoes need to fit well and be in good repair. Features of good shoes include:

- › a broad, slightly rounded heel less than one inch (2.5cm) high – this will make you more stable as it distributes your weight better, and has better contact with the ground
- › a firm, flat, non-slip sole that bends mainly at the ball of the foot
- › shoes with soles that have the right amount of grip – not too slippery but not too resistant
- › a shape that conforms to the shape of your foot and are held on by laces, zips or velcro fastenings.



Avoid loose fitting sling backs, slippers, thongs or scuffs.

Are your shoes going to help you Stay On Your Feet®?

I wear shoes with a sharp, square shaped heel edge

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Consider the heel of your shoe. A heel with a rounded or bevelled edge is less likely to slip.

What sort of soles do your shoes have?

I wear shoes that have a very thick (1¼ inches or 3cm) or a very soft cushioned sole Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Shoes that have thick, very soft soles may reduce your ability to 'read' the ground or floor surface when you walk.

I am unsure if my shoes have a flexible sole Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

To test the flexibility of your shoe sole, hold one shoe with two hands and bend it to see how well the sole flexes. The sole should be firm but flexible at the ball of the foot.

The firmness helps to grip the ground and the flexibility makes walking comfortable.

Do your shoes fit well?

I wear shoes that are too loose or too tight Yes No

I wear sling backs, slippers, scuffs, or thongs Yes No

If you answered 'Yes' to either question

Consider the fit of your shoe.

- › Shoes need to fit comfortably and suit the shape of your foot. They also need to have ankle support.
- › Styles that don't fit firmly or have ankle support (such as sling backs, slippers, scuffs or thongs) are a common cause of people being hospitalised for falls.

How worn are your shoes?

I wear shoes that are well worn or in bad repair Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Consider the state of your shoes. If they are worn down, this can increase your risk of falls. It is best to fix them or discard them – it may seem costly but not as costly as recovering from a fall.

Tips to help you select and wear safe footwear

- › Check the style of your shoes and make sure that they are suited to the types of activity you do in terms of their heels, soles and fit.
- › Check the state of your shoes – are they still safe?
- › Avoid wearing socks without shoes.
- › Talk with a health professional, such as a podiatrist or physiotherapist, about any concerns you have about your feet or footwear. Ask them about specialist shoe stores that may have shoes that would be suitable for you.

Who can help?

- › Podiatrist (refer to page 39 for more information)
- › Specialist shoe retailer.

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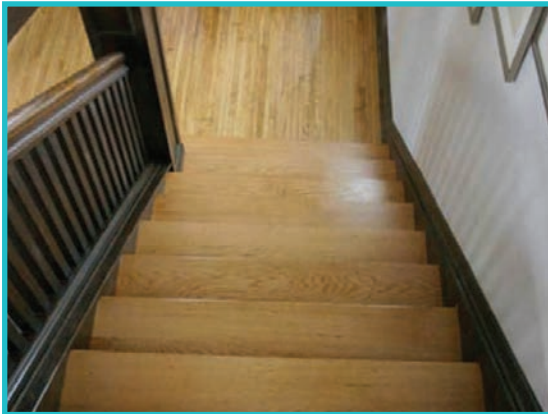
Vision

Many changes in vision are gradual and may go unnoticed. These changes begin at around 40 years of age and can make it difficult to judge distances, see the edges of stairs and objects on the ground or adjust to changes in light. It is important to have your eyes checked by an optometrist every year.

Have your vision checked every year.

Some eye conditions can affect your vision and make it difficult to see. These pictures show how some eye conditions can affect your vision.

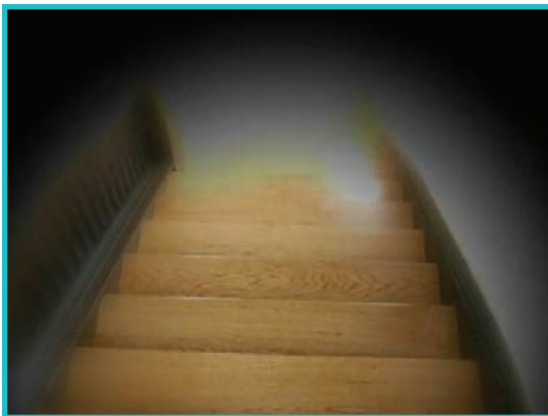
Normal



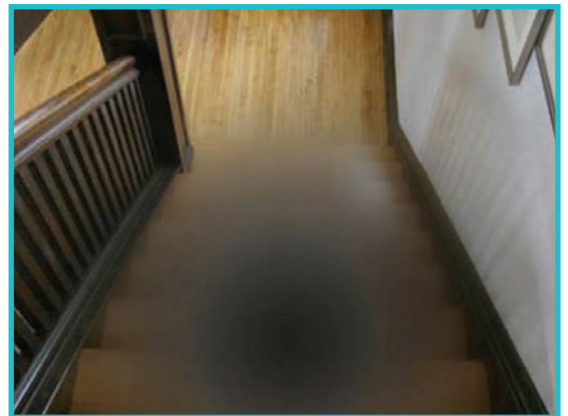
Cataracts



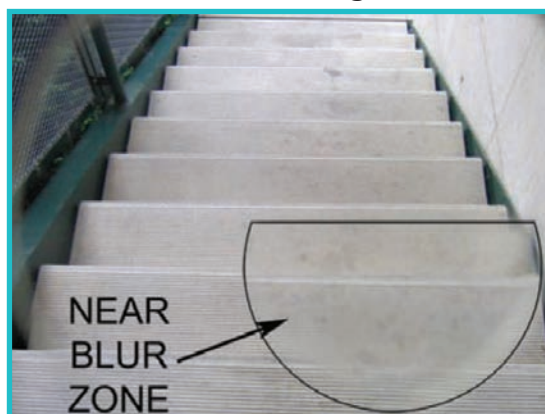
Glaucoma



Age-related maculopathy



Stairs viewed through bifocals



Do you maintain your eyes and glasses?

I have not had my eyes examined in the last year

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Ideally, it is best to have your eyes checked by an optometrist every year or more regularly if recommended by your eye care practitioner. Medicare covers this.

I have not had my eyeglasses prescription checked in the last year

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Your optometrist can check if the prescription for your glasses is still correct and that they still fit properly. If you get new glasses or a stronger prescription, it may take time for you to get used to them. Make sure you take extra care while they are new. The Spectacle Supply Scheme (SSS) provides eligible Queensland residents with a pair of basic prescription spectacles, once every two years.

Do you have trouble seeing as you walk around?

My eyes take a long time to adjust to different light levels

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

As you walk around, your eyes take time to adjust to different levels of light. Sudden changes in light levels may make it hard to see clearly or make you unsteady. To reduce this, you can wear a hat and sunglasses when outside to reduce glare and make it easier to see. When moving to or from bright to dim areas, you can stop, hold onto something and wait for your eyes to adjust.

I have trouble seeing the edges of the stairs clearly in my home

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Contrast strips applied to the edges of stairs can help you to better judge the height and depth of stairs. These strips can be purchased from a hardware store and applied to stair edges. You should also have your eyes checked by an optometrist every two years or more regularly if recommended by your eye care practitioner.

I wear bifocal or multifocal glasses when walking around

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

If you wear bifocals or multifocals while walking, your perception of depth can be distorted, particularly when walking up or down stairs. Talk to your optometrist about whether you need a separate pair of distance vision glasses for walking around.

Tips to help with vision

- › Medicare subsidises eye tests provided by optometrists for all Australian permanent residents.
- › Check your glasses regularly to make sure the lenses are clean and not scratched.
- › Keep your eyes and glasses in good working order by having them both checked regularly by an optometrist.
- › Ensure your stair and shelf edges are obvious by applying contrast strips to the edges.
- › If you need cataract surgery, talk with your doctor or specialist about how soon you can have them removed. There are often waiting lists for this type of surgery so talk to your doctor as soon as possible.

Who can help?

- › Optometrist
- › Orthoptist
- › Ophthalmologist

Further information on the health professionals listed above is available on page 41.

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Strong bones, muscles and healthy eating

A balanced diet and weight bearing exercise is important to maintain good health, strong bones and muscles as well as provide sufficient energy to undertake the day's activities.

Eat well every day and enjoy sharing meals with others.

Weight bearing or resistance exercises are important as these help to build and maintain strong bones. Such exercises include activities where you support your own body weight like brisk walking, dancing, hiking, stair climbing, jogging and exercises using resistance or weights. If you have been inactive for a while or have a health condition, check with your doctor before starting physical activity.

Do you look after your bones?

I have not done 30 minutes of weight bearing exercise today (e.g. walking) Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Each day, you need to be active in as many ways as you can. At least twice each week, you need to include some weight bearing or resistance exercises as these help to build and maintain strong bones.

I have back pain that started suddenly Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

If you experience sudden back pain for no apparent reason, this could be a sign of osteoporosis or other serious medical conditions. Visit your doctor for medical attention as soon as you can.

I have become shorter over the years Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Becoming shorter over the years could be a sign of osteoporosis. Visit your doctor for medical attention as soon as you can.

I have had broken bones in the past few years

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Broken bones can be a sign of osteoporosis. Visit your doctor as soon as you can and ask if you qualify for an osteoporosis risk assessment (bone mineral density test). This test will determine your bone strength as well as possible treatment options to help to reduce your risk of fractures in the future.

Do you eat healthy meals that help you to keep strong and active?

Each day, I eat less than three to four servings of high calcium foods (such as milk, yoghurt, cheese, salmon, sardines or calcium enriched products)

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

For adults, the recommended daily intake of calcium per day is 1000mg. For women (post-menopause) and men aged over 70 years, the recommended daily intake of calcium is 1300 mg per day.

To achieve this daily intake, you need to eat three to four servings of high-calcium foods. One serving is 250 ml of milk, 40g cheese, 200g of yoghurt or 100g of tinned salmon or sardines. If you do not eat enough calcium-rich food, see your doctor or dietitian for further advice on calcium supplements.

I do not take any Vitamin D supplements

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Being deficient in Vitamin D can affect your bone and muscle strength as this vitamin helps our bodies to absorb calcium from food. While Vitamin D comes from sunshine this is not always straightforward (and carries a risk of sunburn or skin cancer). It's best to consult your doctor, pharmacist or dietitian to see if you need Vitamin D supplements.

I have difficulty chewing or eating food

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Talk to your dentist about any problems with your teeth, gums or false teeth. Ask your doctor if a speech pathologist could be helpful for you.

I have a reduced appetite so am often not hungry

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Living alone, depression, some health conditions and some medications can reduce your appetite. Your doctor may be able to help if there is an underlying reason for the loss of appetite – like a medical condition or a medication issue. Ask your doctor if a dietitian could be helpful for you.

I have experienced unplanned weight loss

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

If you experience sudden or unplanned weight loss, you may need a nutritional assessment. Make an appointment with your doctor to investigate any potential medical reasons for a referral to a dietitian.

Do you have difficulties preparing meals?

I find it difficult to shop for food

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

It can be difficult to buy food if you can't get to the shops. This may be due to a number of reasons, such as not being very mobile, the public transport system isn't adequate, the shops are limited, or you have a low income. To see if you are eligible for assistance with shopping and to find out what services can help you contact your local council or My Aged Care and Carer Gateway (details available on page 38).

I find it difficult to prepare food

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

There are many factors that can make preparing food difficult. These include living alone, cooking for one, being recently bereaved and never having had to cook before, and having trouble with daily activities.

You can overcome some of these issues by talking to a dietitian about simple recipe ideas or by looking at options, such as frozen meals or Meals on Wheels. Contact My Aged Care and Carer Gateway to discuss options available in your local area (details available on page 38).

Tips for healthy eating each day

Eating a range of nutritious foods is as important as staying active. As you get older, you have to get smarter about eating better. Dietary requirements could change as your need for energy may decrease, while your need for nutrients, such as proteins, vitamins and minerals, may stay the same or even increase.

Take time to eat a wide variety of nutritious foods including:

Fruits and Vegetables

- › Eat two serves of fruit and five serves of vegetables, including different colours to give your body a wide range of valuable nutrients including magnesium, potassium, vitamin C and folate
 - › one serve of fruit is one medium piece of fruit, two small pieces of fruit or one cup of chopped or canned fruit
 - › one serve of vegetable is ½ cup cooked vegetables or one cup of salad.

Calcium

- › Ensure you get enough calcium, eat 2.5–4 serves of milk, yoghurt, cheese daily. These foods are rich sources of calcium, vitamin A, D and B12
 - › one serve is 250ml of milk, 40g cheese, 200g of yoghurt or 100g of tinned salmon or sardines
 - › if you are unable to eat dairy products and/or fish, discuss alternative sources of calcium with your doctor or dietitian.
- › Consider supplementing your calcium and vitamin D intake in consultation with a health professional.

Fluids

- › Remember to drink eight glasses (8 x 250ml) of fluid each day unless your fluid intake is restricted because of medical advice. Water is best and you can flavour it with fresh mint or lemon.
- › Drinking alcohol increases the risk of falls and injuries, as well as some chronic conditions. Therefore a low alcohol intake is recommended. The Australian Alcohol Guidelines recommend that older people consult with their health professional about the most appropriate level of drinking for their health. For more information on the guidelines for low-risk alcohol consumption, visit www.alcohol.gov.au.

Other tips

- › Try to boost your fibre by choosing wholegrain cereals.
- › Sharing meal times with family and friends may help to improve your appetite.

Who can help?

- › Doctor
- › Nutritionist
- › Dietitian
- › Speech pathologist
- › Dentist
- › Home and Community Care
- › Nutrition Society of Australia
- › Dietitians Australia
- › Speech Pathology Australia
- › Australian Dental Association Queensland

For further information about services in your local area, contact My Aged Care and Carer Gateway or Dietitians Australia (contact details available on page 38 and on page 40).

I plan to take action by...

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Continence

Problems with bladder and bowel control can be embarrassing, however there are health professionals who deal specifically with this issue. Incontinence is a common problem and it can be managed.

With help, you can manage incontinence and resume a healthy active lifestyle.

Do you have trouble with incontinence during the day?

I need to go to the toilet frequently during the day Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Talk with a continence specialist who can assess your continence issues and suggest strategies to manage them.

Sometimes I need to rush to go to the toilet Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Increase your self awareness and give yourself plenty of time to get to the toilet. Learn how much time you have on average between the first sensation of bladder filling and the time when you absolutely have to get to the toilet. Plan to get to the toilet with adequate time.

I have difficulty undressing in time to use the toilet Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Think about the type of clothing you choose to wear. Avoid multiple layers and firm fitting outer garments. Clothing with elasticised waistbands is easier than fastenings like buckles, buttons and zips.

I sometimes experience leakage from my bladder or bowel Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

You could keep a 24-hour record of when you go to the toilet, the volume of urine you pass, and a description of your bowel movement (hard, soft, runny etc.). Take this record with you to talk with your doctor or continence specialist.

I tend to stay at home more because I worry about bladder or bowel leakage

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Talk with a continence specialist about strategies to manage bladder and bowel problems during social outings.

Do you have trouble with incontinence at night time?

Sometimes I wet the bed at night

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

There are a range of strategies you can use:

- › go to the toilet immediately before going to bed
- › think about the drinks you have after your evening meal
- › discuss fluid intake with a continence specialist
- › discuss the type and timing of medication with your pharmacist or doctor
- › consider using continence aids, such as pads
- › consider using a waterproof bed sheet
- › place a commode or a urinal next to your bed.

I need to go to the toilet during the night

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Your general practitioner can help if you feel you are not emptying your bladder fully, or if the urine stream is poor. Also:

- › think about the drinks you have after your evening meal
- › discuss fluid intake with a continence specialist
- › discuss the type and timing of medication with your pharmacist or doctor
- › review your night lighting.

Tips to help with incontinence

- › Talk about any incontinence issues with your doctor or other health professional.
- › Consider a continence assessment by a continence advisor or continence physiotherapist.

Who can help?

- › Contenance advisor
- › Contenance physiotherapist
- › Doctor
- › Pharmacist

For further information or to find a continence specialist in your area, contact the Contenance Foundation of Australia (details available on page 40).

When out and about, plan your trip by using the National Public Toilet Map, which is a useful website showing the locations of public and private toilets across Australia. Visit the website: www.toiletmap.gov.au.

I plan to take action by...

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Safety in and around the home

The majority of falls occur in and around the home. Most falls occur in the bedroom, garden and living or family areas as a result of tripping or slipping due to lighting and structural hazards.

While health and lifestyle issues are important to reduce your falls risk, it is also important to minimise any falls risk factors in your everyday surroundings.

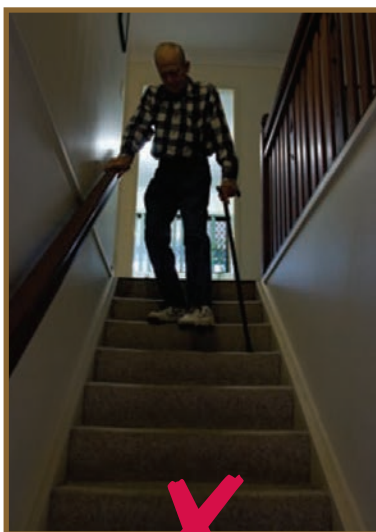
This section will help you identify common hazards in and around your home so they can be minimised or modified. Many changes can be made during renovations or when planning and building a new home.

When addressing these hazards, make sure any work is done safely using correct equipment, such as a stable ladder, and with someone nearby to help. You may be eligible for assistance with home maintenance and modifications. Further information on Home Assist Secure is provided on page 40.



Inside the home

Identify, remove or modify hazards in and around your home.





Lighting

As we age our need for brighter lights increases. Keeping your home brightly lit will help you to avoid tripping over objects.

Ensure that any stairs are well lit, with a light switch at the top and bottom of the stairs. To help locate light switches try using illuminated, glow in the dark light switches.

Ensure outside paths are well lit and consider sensor lights. Be storm ready with a torch and batteries in case of power outages.

During the night, I find it difficult to see to go to the bathroom

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Good lighting that you can easily turn on at night will help to prevent a trip when going to the bathroom. To improve night lighting, you can place a lamp within reach of your bed, plug nightlights into power points or use portable sensor lights. Consider installing motion sensor lighting for the bedroom and bathroom.



Bathroom and toilet

The bathroom can present a slipping hazard. Non-slip floorings are important and non-slip products in the shower or bath, such as paints or self-adhesive non-slip strips, can make these areas less slippery.

If you feel you need additional support, grab rails in the bath or shower and beside the toilet are a good idea. An occupational therapist can advise you of the correct position for grab rails in your bathroom.

When bathing or showering, have all your toiletries within easy reach so you do not need to stretch or bend to use them. A shower caddy can help to keep them organised and off the floor so they don't trip you up.

I tend to hold onto taps or towel rails to get in or out of the bath or shower

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Taps and towel rails are not designed to hold the weight of a person. Grab rails can be installed to provide you with reliable and safe support.

I feel unsteady standing in the shower

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Think about using a shower stool or chair. Do not use a plastic garden stool or chair as these can be dangerous. They are not designed to be slip resistant or to withstand hot water or soap. They can slide or collapse without warning.

Tips to help with bathroom and toilet safety

- › Try to keep floors dry and mop up any wet puddles as soon as possible.
- › If you are sometimes unsteady, a hand-held shower hose, a shower chair or bath seat can help.

Who can help?

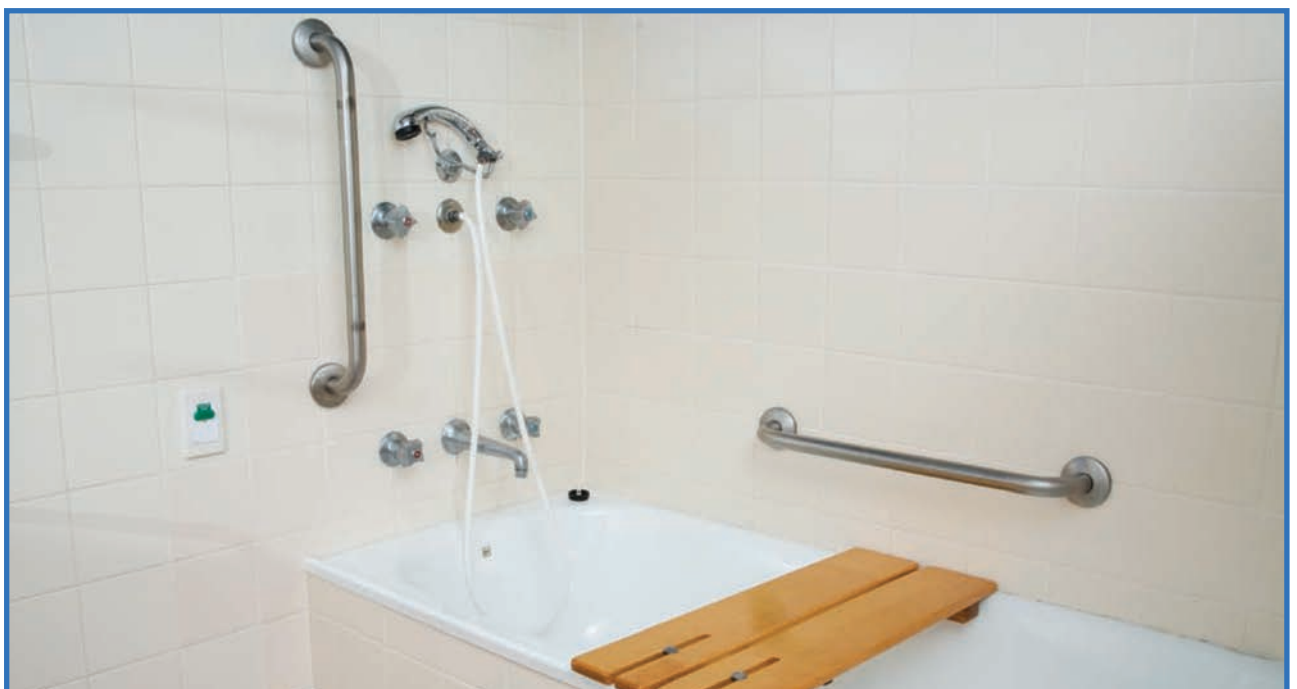
- › An occupational therapist, Life Tec Queensland, your local community health centre or Home Assist Secure can all provide advice on bathroom equipment and modifications. Further information on these services is available on pages 38 to 41.

I plan to make the bathroom safer by...

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Kitchen

Identify, remove or modify hazards by making your work areas more convenient for reaching.

The kitchen is an area used regularly, so make sure that it is organised, well lit and ventilated.

Is your kitchen convenient and well organised?

The bench or counter is not at a comfortable height for me Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Counters and tables should be at the right height for your size and be sturdy enough to support your weight if you lean on them – don't use a collapsible table, such as a card table.

The things I need are not always within easy reach Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Arrange your kitchen so the items you use most frequently are easy to reach. Place them between hip and eye level. Wall ovens at waist height are better than low ovens.

Tips to help with kitchen safety

- › A tray-mobile or trolley can be useful to transport items safely.
- › Clean up spills immediately using a long handled mop and remove any grease residue to prevent slips and falls.
- › If you find it necessary to reach high places, use a broad-based, sturdy and secure ladder with handrails.
- › Contact Home Assist Secure, see page 40 for contact information.

I plan to make the kitchen safer by...

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Lounge room or living room

Identify, remove or modify hazards and make sure you have what you need within easy reach.

Is your lounge room comfortable, convenient and free of clutter?

I find it difficult to get out of my lounge chair

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Chairs are easier to get in or out of if they are not too low and have solid armrests. Chairs that are low – where hips are lower than knees in the sitting position, or couches and settees with limited arm rests – can be difficult to get up from. It is easier to get up if the seat is high and the arm rests are solid.

Tips to help in the lounge room

- › A cordless or mobile phone that you take with you means you don't need to rush to answer the phone.
- › Check for loose rugs or mats and remove any that have curled edges. Secure others using non-slip underlay purchased from hardware or variety stores.
- › Check that clutter on the floor doesn't become a risk. This includes items such as magazines, newspapers, craftwork and knitting on the floor near your lounge chair.

Who can help?

- › Talk to your doctor or health professional, such as your physiotherapist, about leg strengthening exercises to help you get up from a chair more easily.

I plan to make the lounge room safer by...

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Floors, walkways and stairs

Like all rooms, hallways and stairs need to be well lit, preferably with 75 watt bulbs if your light fittings will take them. You may need more lights or switches installed by an electrician.

Floor surfaces that are less slippery, such as carpet or slip resistant tiles, are less of a falls risk.

Any floor coverings, particularly mats, should be checked to ensure they are in good condition and don't have holes, curled up edges or frayed sections that can trip you up.

Stairs and steps are other problem areas that need to be checked regularly for any hazards. Make sure your stairways are well lit, not slippery and that you have safe and adequate hand rails. Stairs and steps should comply with the *Building Code of Australia* as well as the *Australian Standard AS 1657-2018: Fixed platforms, walkways, stairways and ladders - Design, construction and installation*.

Could you slip or trip on the floor coverings or on stairs?

I have rugs and mats throughout the house

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Check and remove loose mats or make sure they are firmly secured and are non-slip. There are non-slip products available from hardware stores that can be applied to floors and rugs or mats.

I have electrical cords running across walkways

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Avoid having electrical extension cords running across floors by having an electrician install additional power points. If you are unable to install additional power points, then move the cord to run along the walls, not across the floor. The cords can be secured with self adhesive cord clips that attach to the base of the wall.

The edges of my stairs are not clear

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Clearly mark stair edges with white or yellow paint or adhesive non-slip stair edging. These are available for a minimal cost from most hardware stores.

If the stairs are carpeted, the carpet should have a short pile, be light in colour and not heavily patterned.

My stairs or steps lack handrails

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Homes built before 1992 may not have adequate handrails. Handrail height should not be less than 900mm or more than 1100mm. Make sure there are handrails on at least one side of all steps and stairways. Ideally, there should be handrails on both sides of steps and stairways.

Tips to help with floors and stairs

- › Highly polished floors and shiny tiles can be very slippery, so be careful that any cleaning products don't leave too much residue that makes the floor too slippery or too sticky.

Who can help?

- › An electrician can fit extra power points or light switches and can also check your light fittings to see if they can take a 75 watt bulb.



I plan to make the floors, walkways and stairs safer by...

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Pets

Owning a pet is good for companionship, your health and wellbeing.

Do you have pets?

My pet is often around my feet or nearly pulls me over when walking

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Pets and pet products (such as toys, food bowls, walking leads and bedding) can create trip hazards leading to a fall. Address these hazards by:

- › Keeping pet toys, food bowls and bedding out of walkways.
- › Behaviour training for dogs to stop the pulling when walking or jumping on you and pushing you over.
- › Do not step over a pet – get them to move so you can safely walk past.
- › Teach your pet to return when called, do not chase after a pet.



Outside the home

Identify, remove or modify hazards by ensuring your outside space is orderly and well lit.

Areas outside the home need to be safe, well lit and have properly maintained surfaces – especially outdoor tiles and paths which can become slippery when wet.

In public places, look out for trip and slip hazards. If you notice something that could cause falls, report it to the relevant authority (e.g. the local council or shopping centre management).

Is your home in good shape outside?

The paths around my house are cracked and in disrepair Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Check for broken pavers and ask for help to have any raised pavers re-laid. Keep paths free of moss and leaves, and remove any obstacles, such as gardening tools, hoses and small pots.

The public footpath near my house is cracked or in disrepair Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Take a photo of the damaged footpath area and send it with a letter, email or webform describing the location and type of hazard to your local council. You may need to follow up the progress of your letter, email or webform.

Tips to help with safety outside your home

- Outside steps and stairs may need non-slip edging. Leaf litter should also be removed.
- Many bad falls result from the use of ladders, so use appropriate safe equipment and ask for assistance. If this is not available, consider postponing the task until someone can help.

Who can help?

- Home Assist Secure can assist with minor home maintenance, repairs, modifications and security if these changes will help with your health, safety and security. Further information on Home Assist Secure is available on page 40.

I plan to make outside the home safer by...

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Home maintenance

Many falls result from trying to do jobs that are too hard to reach. If you have odd jobs that need doing, make sure you have the right equipment or consider asking someone to either do it or help you with it. Don't risk your health and independence by doing it alone.

I don't really think much about safety before I tackle odd jobs

Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

If you use what is close at hand, such as a stool or a chair, instead of the right equipment, you put yourself at risk of the stool or chair toppling over. Make sure you keep a sturdy stepladder with handrails handy.

Tips to help with home maintenance

- › Move frequently used items to within easy reach to reduce the need for ladders.
- › Check regularly that your stepladder or step stool is in good condition. The best ladders are sturdy, broad-based ladders with handrails and are available from hardware stores.
- › Make sure you have another person with you when you are using a stepladder or ladder.

Who can help?

- › Further information on Home Assist Secure is available on page 40.

I plan to make home maintenance safer by...

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Personal alarms and walking aids

If you are concerned that you may experience a fall, you can invest in a personal alarm to be worn around your neck or in a pocket. Some alarms are activated if the wearer falls. Others require the alarm to be pressed for assistance.

Walking aids (e.g. walking stick, four wheeled walker) can help to increase your steadiness and improve your confidence to be more mobile, however they need to suit your needs and be maintained.

I have not checked my walking aid recently Yes No

If you answered 'Yes'

Check any walking aids regularly and replace or repair equipment or parts that are deteriorating or feel unsteady. In particular, check the rubber ferrules (or stoppers), ensure the adjustable holes function properly, and look to see that there are no cracks in the aids. Discuss with the health professional who recommended/prescribed the walking aid.

Who can help?

- Information about types of personal alarms that are available can be discussed with your health professional or you can refer to the CHOICE website www.choice.com.au for their product review. When looking after your walking aid, mobility aid and equipment contact the Medical Aid Subsidy Scheme (MASS) (further details available on page 40).

I plan to increase my safety through getting advice about equipment by...

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What to do if you fall at home

FALL

Don't panic!

Take a moment to assess the situation

Check your body

If you are not badly injured, think about whether to get up

If you are injured, (e.g. have a broken bone) stay where you are and seek help

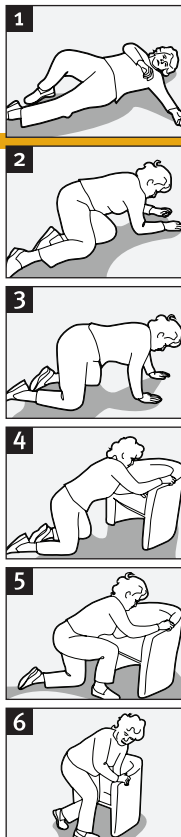
Make a decision whether to get up or not

Not injured

If injured

To get up off the ground, try this:

1. Roll onto your side
 2. Crawl or drag yourself over to the chair
 3. Get onto your hands and knees
 4. From a kneeling position, put your arms up onto the seat of the chair
 5. Bring one knee forward, put that foot on the floor and push up off the ground using that leg and your hands
 6. Push up with your arms and legs, and pivot your bottom around
- Do not pull on furniture as you may pull it over onto yourself



If NOT successful in getting up
Try sliding or crawling to seek help

Front door

Telephone

Personal alarm

Make a loud noise

If successful
Take time to recover

Tell someone you have had a fall and seek medical assistance from your doctor

Make yourself comfortable and warm
Lie quietly after you know someone has responded to your calls for help

This flowchart is based on information from Falls Prevention Your Home Safety Checklist Stay On Your Feet WA® Health Department of WA (HP7926) and Stay On Your Feet Adelaide West (2004)

Acknowledgments

The Queensland Stay On Your Feet® Checklist was originally developed as part of the Quality Improvement and Enhancement Program's Falls Prevention for Public Hospitals and State Government Aged Care Facilities Project.

In 2008, the Checklist was updated by the Statewide Falls Injury Prevention Collaborative Education and Resource Working Group. The Working Group would like to thank the following people/organisations for their assistance with developing and reviewing the Checklist:

Queensland Government

- › Queensland Health
 - › Population Health project officers
 - › Nutrition and physical activity team, Healthy Living Branch
 - › Health professionals throughout Queensland
- › Home and Community Care (HACC)

Working groups

- › Injury Prevention/Safety Promotion Working Group Members
- › Safe Communities Senior Safety Group

External contributors

- › Council on the Ageing Queensland peer educators
- › GPpartners
- › Members of the community
- › Optometrists Association Australia Qld/NT Division (Greg Johnson)
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- › School of Optometry, Queensland University of Technology (Professor Joanne Wood and Alex Black)
- › St David's Neighbourhood Centre Harmony Club members

The Checklist was designed by GoPrint (Maria How and Shelley Matthews) and editorial support was provided by Biolines (Anne Leitch) and Cindy Mayes.

This Checklist has been adapted by Queensland Health with copyright permission from:

- › Stay On Your Feet WA® (Department of Health Western Australia)
- › South Australian Adelaide West Falls and Injury Prevention Project
- › North Coast Public Health Unit Falls Prevention Program (NSW Health)
- › Several falls prevention publications.

The registered trademark, Stay On Your Feet®, is used with kind permission from the Department of Health, Western Australia. Patient Safety and Quality, Clinical Excellence Queensland, Queensland Health updates this checklist.

Contacts Appendix

Australian Government

› My Aged Care

Phone: 1800 200 422 (8am–8pm Monday to Friday, 10am–2pm on Saturdays)

Website: www.myagedcare.gov.au

My Aged Care is a website and phone line to help you get clear and reliable information on aged care services in your local area, as well as information on how to be active and healthy. There is also information available for carers including how to get respite, counselling and how to find other aged care services. If your first language is not English and you need assistance, My Aged Care can provide you with access to interpreter services and translated materials.

› Carer Gateway

Phone: 1800 422 737 (free call)

Website: www.carergateway.gov.au

You will need to talk with Carer Gateway to find out about the respite care that is available in your area and for over 65 years of age call My Aged Care.

› Department of Veteran's Affairs

Phone: 1800 (VETERAN) 1800 838 372

Email: GeneralEnquires@dva.gov.au

Website: www.dva.gov.au

This department offers support and services for veterans, their family and carers eligible for assistance.

Queensland Government

› 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84)

Phone: 13 432 584 (for the cost of a local call, 24 hours a day, seven days a week)

This is a confidential phone service, available to Queenslanders 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, for the cost of a local call. You can speak with a registered nurse who will provide health-related advice over the phone for health information and assessment of symptoms.

› Queensland Government Seniors page

Phone Seniors One Stop Enquiry line: 1300 135 500

Website: www.qld.gov.au/seniors

Information for Queensland seniors including health, housing, retirement, safety, recreation, and pensions and concessions.

› Parks and Forests, Department of Environment and Science

Phone 13 QGOV (13 74 68)

Website: <https://parks.des.qld.gov.au/>

Offers information about parks, forests, camping, things to do which may help motivate you to stay active.

- › **Department of Housing and Public Works: Home Assist Secure**
 Phone: 13 QGOV (13 74 68)
 Postal address: Department of Housing and Public Works,
 GPO Box 690, Brisbane Qld 4001
 Website: www.qld.gov.au/housing/buying-owning-home/maintenance-modifications/maintenance-assistance/home-assist-secure
 Information about Home Assist Secure program for Queenslanders aged 60 years and over, or people of any age with a disability, which provides safety related information, referrals and subsidised assistance to eligible clients unable to undertake or pay for critical maintenance without assistance.
- › **Department of Housing and Public Works: Smart Housing: Towards Sustainable Housing: Safety and Security**
 Phone (07) 3238 3683
 Email: smarthousing@housing.qld.gov.au
 Website: www.chde.qld.gov.au
- › **60 and Better Program**
 Phone: 13 QGOV (13 74 68)
 Website: www.qld.gov.au/seniors/recreation-staying-connected/social-connection-leisure/staying-connected-your-community
 The 60 and Better Program supports older people to develop and manage healthy ageing programs in their own communities. The program offers a mix of physical, social and intellectual activities. It is a great way to meet people and develop new interests. Activities include exercise programs, health talks, craft activities, theatre groups, card games and opportunities to explore computers and information technology.

Community Organisations

- › **Arthritis Queensland**
 Phone: 1800 011 041 (free call)
 Website: www.arthritis.org.au
 This organisation (which incorporates Osteoporosis Queensland) is a non-profit organisation which aims to help those living with the conditions of arthritis and osteoporosis.
- › **Australian Podiatry Association**
 Website: www.podiatry.org.au
 This organisation can help you find a podiatrist in your area by visiting the website.
- › **Australian Dental Association Queensland**
 Phone: (07) 3252 9866
 Website: www.adaq.com.au
 This organisation represents about 90 per cent of registered dentists and dental specialists. Find a dentist by visiting the website.
- › **Australian Physiotherapy Association**
 Phone: 1300 306 622
 Website: <https://australian.physio/aboutus>
 This organisation represents over 31,000 physiotherapists across Australia. Find a physiotherapist by visiting the website.

- › **Australian Psychological Society**
 Phone: 1800 333 497
 Website: www.psychology.org.au
 This organisation is the largest professional association for psychologists in Australia. Find a psychologist by visiting the website.
- › **Contenance Foundation of Australia**
 Phone: 1800 330 066
 Website: www.contenance.org.au
 This foundation can link you with service providers to assist people with incontinence, their families, carers and health professionals in understanding and managing incontinence.
- › **Council on the Ageing Queensland**
 Phone: (07) 3316 2999
 Website: www.cotaqld.org.au
 This group is dedicated to protecting and promoting the wellbeing of all Queenslanders over the age of 50.
- › **Dietitians Australia**
 Phone: 1800 812 942
 Website: www.dietitiansaustralia.org.au
 This organisation is the peak body for dietetic and nutrition professionals. Find a dietitian by visiting the website.
- › **Exercise Physiology**
 Website: <https://ahpa.com.au/allied-health-professions/exercise-physiology/>
 Accredited exercise physiologists specialise in clinical exercise interventions for people with a broad range of health issues.
- › **Life Tec Queensland**
 Phone: 1300 LIFETEC (1300 543 383)
 Website: www.lifetec.org.au
 This organisation provides information, education, and consultation on devices, technology or designs which can improve your quality of life and help you to live independently.
- › **MedicineWise**
 Phone: 1300 MEDICINE (1300 633 424)
 Website: www.nps.org.au
 The National Prescribing Service is an independent organisation supporting the quality use of medicines. They offer consumers information about medicines through free materials and through phone advice on the Medicines Line.
- › **Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme (MASS)**
 Phone (07) 3136 3636 or 1300 443 570 (toll free)
 Website: www.health.qld.gov.au/mass
 Subsidy funding for medical aids and equipment is available to eligible Queenslanders with permanent/stable conditions or disabilities. Aids and equipment are subsidy funded either on a permanent loan basis, private ownership or through the supply of consumables.

› **Nutrition Australia**

Phone: (07) 3257 4393

Website: www.nutritionaustralia.org

Nutrition Australia is a non-government, non-profit, community based organisation with offices throughout Australia. A nutritionist will usually have completed a tertiary qualification in any number of fields, including nutrition, food science and public health. The main role of a nutritionist is to help people achieve optimal health by providing information and advice about health and food choices.

› **Occupational Therapy Australia**

Phone: 1300 682 878

Website: www.otaus.com.au

Occupational therapy is a client-centred health profession concerned with promoting health and well being through occupation. The primary goal of occupational therapy is to enable people to participate in the activities of everyday life. Find your nearest occupational therapist by visiting the website.

› **Optometrists Association of Queensland and Northern Territory**

Phone: (07) 3839 4411

Website: www.optometry.org.au/about-us/our-organisation/optometry-qld-nt/

Optometrists Association Australia assists our members to provide accessible quality eye health and vision care for all Australians. Find your nearest optometrist by visiting the website.

› **Orthoptics Australia**

Phone: (03) 9586 6080

Website: www.orthoptics.org.au

Orthoptists are eye healthcare professionals who are trained in the assessment and treatment of patients with eye disorders.

› **Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists (RANZCO)**

Phone: (02) 9690 1001

Website: www.ranzco.edu

This college provides education and training to medical specialists in the field of ophthalmology. Patient support information is also available from the website.

› **Speech Pathology Australia**

Phone: 1300 368 835

Website: www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au

A speech pathologist can help people having trouble with speaking, communicating, swallowing food and drink. Find your nearest speech pathologist by visiting the website.

All phone numbers, email, postal and web addresses correct at time of printing (January 2024).

**Helping older
Queenslanders
stay healthy, active,
independent and on
their feet.**

