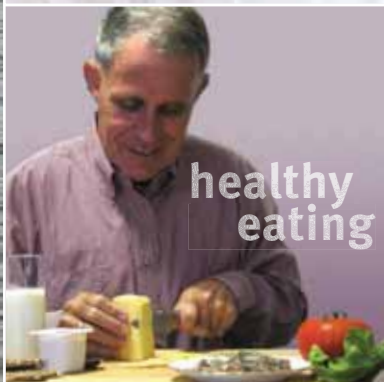
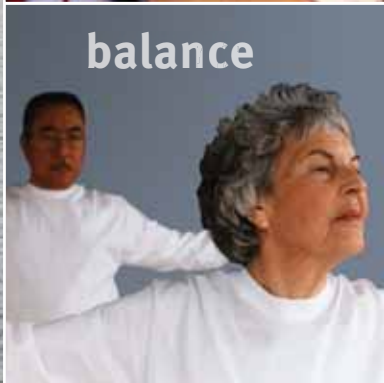
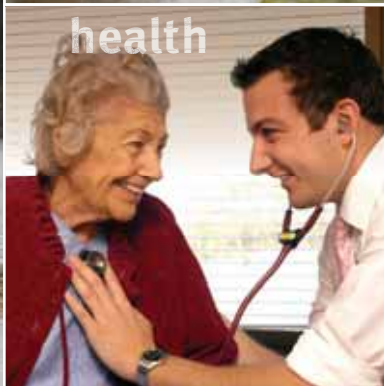




Queensland
Government
Queensland Health

How to Stay On Your Feet[®]

Checklist



independence

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 provides 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 organisations and their contact details provided as an appendix to this 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 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?

- Q** 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.

A **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?

- Q** I do less than two sessions of balance and strength exercises per week Yes No

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

A **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 class or obtain professionally prescribed exercises from a physiotherapist or exercise physiologist.

Q I feel unsteady when walking or become unsteady when I turn around Yes No

A 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.

Q I find it difficult to get up from a chair Yes No

A 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?

Q I have not discussed physical activity with a health professional in the last 12 months Yes No

A 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. 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, or you can have a health professional design a program that best suits your needs.
- › 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
- › Steady Steps
- › Older and Bolder
- › 60 and Better
- › Tai Chi for Arthritis.

Many more activity options are available and can be found on the Department of Communities, Get Active Gateway website and 60 and Better Program (details available on page 38).

The Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre provides 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?

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

A **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 and websites. They can also provide you with contact details for a support group.
- › Seek early treatment if your symptoms change.

- Q I experience feelings of dizziness or light-headedness Yes No

A **If you answered ‘Yes’**

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

Have you lost your confidence because of worrying about falling?

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

A **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.

Q I limit my daily activities because I worry about falling

Yes No

A 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 eg. arthritis support group

Further information on support groups in your area is available from 13 Health and the Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres (further information 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

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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?

Q I take medications that can affect mental alertness or cause dizziness or drowsiness Yes No

A 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.

Q I have trouble remembering all of my medicines and what they are for Yes No

A 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.

Q I forget to take my prescribed medicine correctly eg. at the right time of day, with or without food Yes No

A 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?

Q I tend to remove my medicines from their original containers Yes No

A 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 pack or dosette box.

Do you have your medicines reviewed regularly?

Q 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

A 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.

Q I have not had my medication reviewed in the last 12 months Yes No

A 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 Medicines Line.
 - › 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 Medication Information (CMI) 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 38).

Who can help?

- › Doctor
- › Pharmacist
- › NPS Medicinewise (further information available on page 38).

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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?

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

A If you answered 'Yes'

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

Q I have ingrown toenails or painful feet and ankles Yes No

A 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 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 Council can be found on page 38.

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

- Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres (further information available on page 38).

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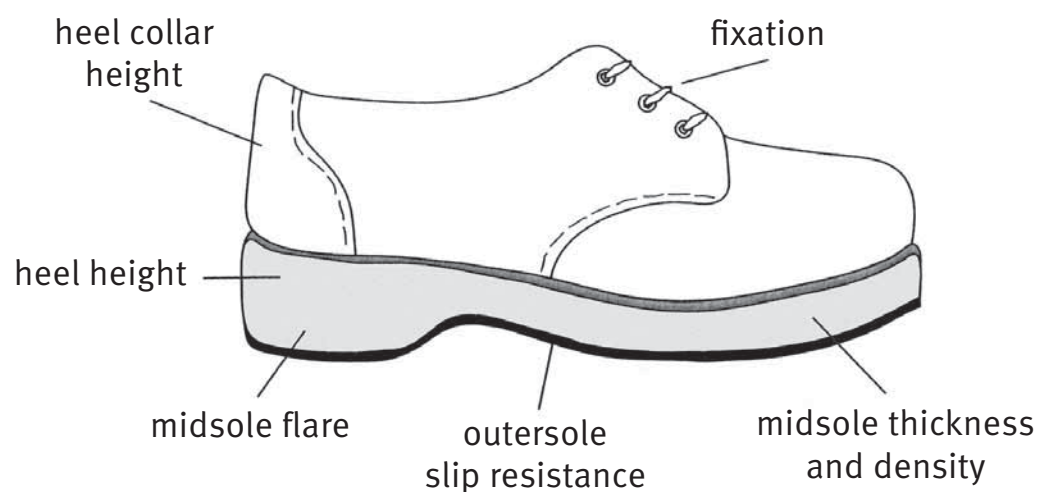
Footwear

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®?

Q I wear shoes with a sharp, square shaped heel edge Yes No

A 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?

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

A 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.

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

A 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?

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

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

A 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?

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

A 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
- 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 two years.

Have your vision checked every two years.

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



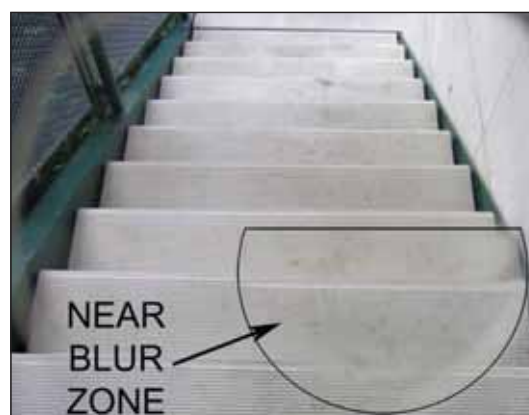
Glaucoma



Age-related maculopathy



Stairs viewed through bifocals



Do you maintain your eyes and glasses?

Q I have not had my eyes examined in the last two years Yes No

A If you answered 'Yes'

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

Q I have not checked my eyeglasses prescription in the last two years Yes No

A 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.

Do you have trouble seeing as you walk around?

Q My eyes take a long time to adjust to different light levels Yes No

A 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.

Q I have trouble seeing the edges of the stairs clearly in my home Yes No

A 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.

Q I wear bifocal or multifocal glasses when walking around Yes No

A 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

- › 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 38.

I plan to take action by ...

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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?

Q I have not done thirty minutes of weight bearing exercise today eg. walking Yes No

A 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.

Q I have back pain that started suddenly Yes No

A If you answered 'Yes'

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

Q I have become shorter over the years Yes No

A 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.

Q I have had broken bones in the past few years

Yes No

A 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?

Q 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

A 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 dietician for further advice on calcium supplements.

Q I do not take any Vitamin D supplements

Yes No

A 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 dietician to see if you need Vitamin D supplements.

Q I sometimes skip meals, meaning I do not eat three meals a day

Yes No

A If you answered 'Yes'

Skipping meals means your body misses out on important protein, fibre, vitamins, minerals and other nutrients that support a healthy active body. Sharing meal times with friends and family may help improve your appetite and be more enjoyable than eating alone.

Q I have difficulty chewing or eating food

Yes No

A If you answered 'Yes'

Talk to your dentist about any problems with your teeth, gums or false teeth. Other problems in the mouth may need a referral from your doctor to a speech pathologist.

Q I have a reduced appetite so am often not hungry

Yes No

A 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. You can also ask your doctor for a referral to a dietician.

Q I have experienced unplanned weight loss

Yes No

A 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 get a referral to a dietician.

Do you have difficulties preparing meals?

Q I find it difficult to shop for food

Yes No

A 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 Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres (details available on page 38).

Q I find it difficult to prepare food

Yes No

A **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 dietician about simple recipe ideas or by looking at options such as frozen meals or Meals on Wheels. Contact Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres to discuss options available in your local area (details available on page 38).

Tips for healthy eating each day

- › Take the time to eat a wide variety of nutritious foods including:
 - › two serves of fruit: one serve is one medium piece of fruit, two small pieces of fruit or one cup of chopped or canned fruit
 - › five serves of vegetables: one serve is ½ cup cooked vegetables or one cup of salad
 - › three to four serves of high calcium foods: 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, discuss alternative sources of calcium with your doctor or dietician)
 - › one serve of protein: one serve is 100gm of meat, poultry, fish or meat alternative or two eggs, ⅓ cup nuts and ½ cup legumes.
- › Remember to drink eight glasses (8 x 250ml) of fluid each day. Water is best and you can flavour it with fresh mint or lemon.
- › Try to boost your fibre by choosing wholegrain cereals.
- › Consider supplementing your calcium and vitamin D intake in consultation with a health professional.
- › For some older adults, 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.
- › Sharing meal times with family and friends may help to improve your appetite.

Who can help?

- › Doctor
- › Nutritionist
- › Dietician
- › Speech pathologist
- › Dentist
- › Home and Community Care
- › Nutritionist Society of Australia
- › Dietician Association of Australia
- › Speech Pathologist Association
- › Australian Dental Association Queensland

For further information about services in your local area, contact Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Services or Home and Community Care (contact details available on page 38).

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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?

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

A If you answered 'Yes'

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

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

A 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.

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

A 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.

Q I sometimes experience leakage from my bladder or bowel Yes No

A 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.

Q I tend to stay at home more because I worry about bladder or bowel leakage Yes No

A 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?

Q Sometimes I wet the bed at night Yes No

A 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.

Q I need to go to the toilet during the night Yes No

A 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.

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 38).

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 38.



Inside the home

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





Bedroom

More than 60 percent of falls happen in the bedroom. The main hazards are getting in and out of bed, insufficient lighting and tripping over cords, bedspreads or clutter on the floor.

Getting in and out of bed is made safer by having a bed that is the right height for you and a mattress that is firm enough to support you getting on or off it.

A safe way to get out of bed is to first roll on to your side and then sit up before you stand up. If you feel dizzy after sitting up, wiggle your toes for a few minutes and wait for any dizziness to settle completely before standing.

Can you get out of bed easily?

Q I find it physically difficult to get in or out of bed Yes No

A If you answered 'Yes'

If you are having difficulty getting on or off your bed, talk with your doctor, an occupational therapist, or a community nurse. There are adjustments and aids available that can help.

I plan to make my bedroom safer by ...

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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.

Q I tend to hold onto taps or towel rails to get in or out of the bath or shower Yes No

A 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.

Q I feel unsteady standing in the shower Yes No

A 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, the Independent Living Centre, 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 page 38.

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.

Often 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?

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

A 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.

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

A 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.

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?

Q I find it difficult to get out of my lounge chair Yes No

A 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 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 stores 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 1657-1992: Fixed platforms, walkways, stairways and ladders - Design, construction and installation*.

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

Q I have rugs and mats throughout the house Yes No

A 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.

Q I have electrical cords running across walkways Yes No

A 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.

Q The edges of my stairs are not clear

Yes No

A 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.

Q My stairs or steps lack handrails

Yes No

A 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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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 eg. the local council or shopping centre management.

Is your home in good shape outside?

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

A 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.

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

A If you answered 'Yes'

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

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 38.

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.

Q I don't really think much about safety before I tackle odd jobs Yes No

A 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 38.

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 can help to increase your steadiness and improve your confidence to be more mobile, however they need to suit your needs and be maintained.

Q I have not checked my walking aid recently Yes No

A 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.

Who can help?

- Information about types of alarms or repairs to walking aids is available from Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Services (further details available on page 38).

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

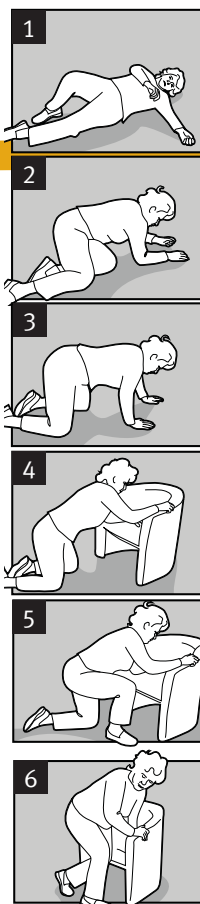
Don't panic!
Stay quiet for a moment and assess the situation
Check your body
If you are not badly injured, think about whether to get up. If you are injured, (eg. have a broken bone) stay where you are and seek help

Make a decision whether to get up or not

Not 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 injured

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

Front door

Telephone

Personal alarm

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)

Acknowledgements

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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

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- › GPpartners
- › Members of the community
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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.

Contacts Appendix

Australian Government

- › Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres – phone free call 1800 052 222
The Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres are information centres for older people, people with disabilities and those who provide care and services. Centres provide free and confidential information on community aged care, disability and other support services available locally, interstate or anywhere within Australia. <http://www9.health.gov.au/ccsd/>
- › Veterans Affairs General enquiries number – phone 133 254
This organisation offers support and services for those people eligible for assistance. <http://www.dva.gov.au>

Queensland Government

- › 13 Health – phone 13432584
This service is for concerns about a health issue but not for emergencies. You can call 13 43 25 8424 for the cost of a local call. This service operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- › Get Active Gateway – phone 1300 656 951
The Queensland Government's Department of Communities provides facts on getting active and ideas for physical activities.
<http://www.sportrec.qld.gov.au/Getactive.aspx>
- › Home and Community Care (HACC) – phone (07) 3139 3200
The Home and Community Care (HACC) program funds basic maintenance and support services to help frail older people and younger people with disabilities to continue living in their community.
<http://www.health.qld.gov.au/hacc/>
- › Home Assist Home Secure – phone 1300 880 882
This service provides free information and referrals about home maintenance, falls prevention, repairs and modifications and home security. Eligible clients may also obtain subsidised assistance for minor home maintenance, repairs and modifications which relate to health, safety and security.
<http://www.public-housing.qld.gov.au/programs/ch/factsheets/has.htm>

- › 60 and Better Program – phone 1300 132 654
This program supports older people to develop and manage healthy ageing programs in their own communities using community development principles and practices. <http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/seniors>
- › Smart Housing – phone (07) 3224 4283
The Smart Housing Program, run by the Queensland Government’s Public Works Department, provides information on improving safety and security around your home.
http://www.works.qld.gov.au/tdd/enviro_build/ss_house/index.asp

Community Organisations

- › Arthritis Queensland – phone free call 1800 011 041
This organisation (which incorporates Osteoporosis Queensland) is a non-profit organisation which aims to help those living with the conditions of arthritis and osteoporosis. <http://www.arthritis.org.au>
- › Australasian Podiatry Council – phone (07) 3371 5800
This organisation can help you find a podiatrist in your area by visiting <http://www.findapodiatrist.org>
- › Australian Dental Association – (07) 3252 9866
This organisation represents about 90% of registered dentists and dental specialists. Find a dentist by visiting <http://www.ada.org.au>
- › Australian Physiotherapy Association - phone (07) 3423 1553
This organisation represents over 12,000 physiotherapists across Australia. Find a physio by visiting <http://physiotherapy.asn.au/>
- › Australian Psychological Society - phone 1800 333 497
This organisation is the largest professional association for psychologists in Australia. Find a psychologist by visiting <http://psychology.org.au/Default.aspx>
- › Contenance Foundation of Australia – phone free call 1800 330 066
This foundation aims to assist people with incontinence, their families, carers and health professionals in understanding and managing incontinence. <http://www.contenance.org.au>

- › Council of the Ageing Queensland (COTAQ) – phone 1300 738 348
 This group is dedicated to protecting and promoting the wellbeing of all Queenslanders over the age of 50. <http://www.cotaq.org.au/>
- › Dieticians Association of Australia – phone 1800 812 942
 This organisation is the peak body for dietetic and nutrition professionals. Find a dietician by visiting www.daa.asn.au
- › Life Tec Queensland – phone 1300 885 886
 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. <http://www.lifetec.org.au>
- › Medicine Wise – phone 1300 633 424
 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. <http://www.nps.org.au>
- › Optometrists Association of Queensland and Northern Territory – phone (07) 3839 4411
 This organisation is the peak body representing the optometry profession. Find your nearest optometrist by visiting <http://www.optometrists.asn.au/Default.aspx?alias=www.optometrists.asn.au/queensland>
- › Orthoptics Australia – phone (03) 9895 4463
 This organisation is the is the national peak body representing orthoptists across Australia. <http://www.orthoptics.org.au>
- › Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists (RANZCO) – phone (02) 9690 10011
 This college provides education and training to medical specialists in the field of ophthalmology. Patient support information is also available from the website <http://www.ranzco.edu>
- › Speech Pathologist Association – phone (07) 3870 8542
 This organisation is the peak body for the speech pathology profession in Australia. Find your nearest speech pathologist by visiting <http://www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au>

All phone numbers and web addresses correct at time of printing (April 2011)