



Mid and South Essex
Integrated Care
System



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Fall Proof:

Preventing falls and staying well

A guide on avoiding some of the most common causes of falls in and around the house.



Every year many people have falls at home. These falls can lead to **trips to the emergency department and serious injuries**.

Preventing falls can help to keep you active and healthy, ensuring you live your life well. In this guide we highlight some of the common causes of falls and how you can take action to decrease your chances of having a fall.

Falls are often caused by hazards that are easy to overlook but are easy to fix if you know what to keep an eye out for. The following pages set out how you can avoid losing balance or feeling dizzy, leading to a fall:

- Discover how your **health and lifestyle** may play a role in your chances of a fall and what changes you can make to lower the risk;
- Read about the **everyday hazards in your home** that increase the risk of you tripping.

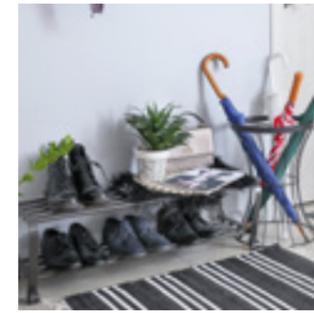


Fall Proof: preventing falls and staying well

Sections of this guide

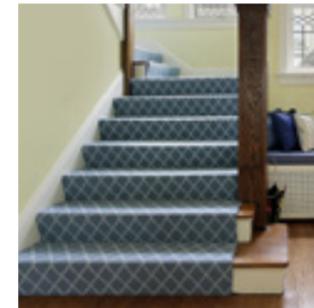
This guide is divided into seven sections which each highlight risks that increase falls. Each section features a checklist of actions you can take to reduce your risk. The focus of each section is:

 T	Trip Hazards
 U	Urine and Hydration
 M	Medication
 B	Balance and Blood Pressure
 L	Lighting and Eyesight
 E	Exercise and Equipment
 S	Slips, Shoes and Slippers



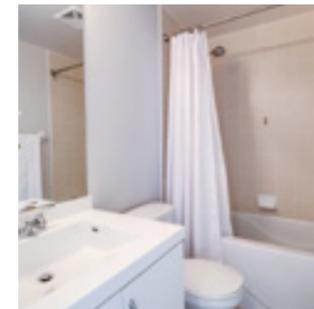
Hallways and porches

- Remove **items** that can cause trips like shoes or umbrellas.
- Don't rush** if your door bell rings. This can cause you to lose your balance or become dizzy.
- Clean up **slip hazards** from outside like mud or water.



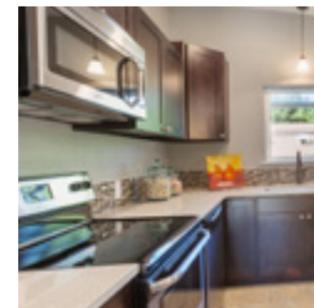
Stairs

- Remove rugs and other **trip hazards**.
- Take care carrying items** like laundry. Try carrying them in a bag so that both arms are free and can hold on to the stair rail.
- Don't leave things on the stairs** to be taken up later.



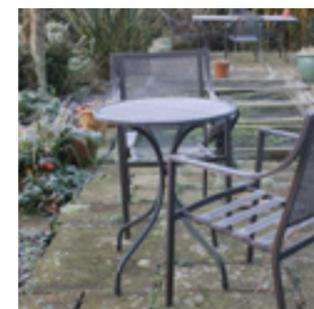
Bathrooms

- Use **non-slip mats** and **handrails** in showers, bathtubs and floors to avoid slips on patches of water.
- Consider handrails** to help you with getting up from a seated position on the toilet or in the bath.
- Use handrails to steady yourself and lights to see if you **get up in the night**.



Kitchens

- Clean up **food and water spills** and make sure the area is dry before walking over it.
- Avoid using **high shelves** and **step stools**. Stretching for items above you can cause you to lose your balance.



Gardens

- Avoid going outside into the garden **when icy**. Ask yourself if you can wait for the ice to thaw. Some surfaces can also be slippery when wet.
- Place items like gardening tools somewhere safe, and be careful of **uneven surfaces, cracks and steps**.



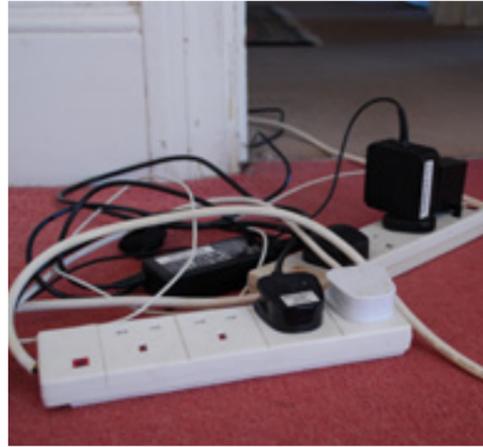
Every home will have furnishings and furniture that can potentially be trip hazards. Where these are located will play a significant role in increasing the risks.

When you walk through a room, make sure the floors are clear of obstacles

- If any furniture blocks your way, then it **should be moved somewhere** else.
- Items like blankets, magazines or shoes should be **kept off the floor**.
- Rugs can cause trips and it is best to **remove them**.
- Make sure wires run along walls and that you **never need to cross a wire** when walking around your home.
- Make sure that any carpet is not **loose or torn**.
- If you have pets, check they are not **resting** where you are walking or have **left a toy** in the middle of the room.

Make sure you do not rush when going around your house

- When going about your home for things like cooking, making tea or visiting the toilet, give yourself **plenty of time** to get there.
- **Don't rush** to the front door if it rings.
- Keep your phone **close to you** in case it rings.



Dehydration and urine infections can cause dizziness and confusion, which can all increase your chances of a fall. There are things you can do to reduce the risks.

Drink plenty of fluids throughout the day

- Make sure to **drink regularly**, especially water. You should drink enough during the day, so your pee is a pale clear colour.
- **Little and often** throughout the day is better than just one or two cups every few hours. Keep drinks within easy reach.
- Take care with **coffee, tea and alcohol**. These cause you to pee more.

Make sure you are steady when going to the toilet

- If you usually stand when you pee, consider **sitting down** instead or steady yourself on a washbasin or handrail.
- Be particularly **careful at night** as getting up from your bed quickly might make you dizzy, or you legs may be more unsteady than during the day.

Consider using a toilet aid

- If you find getting to, or using the toilet is difficult you may benefit from **using a toilet aid**. Speak to your GP if you are having difficulties.
- **A commode is a portable toilet** with a removable pan. These can be kept by your bedside or by your side during the day.
- The British Red Cross provides a hiring service for toilet aids:
[redcross.org.uk/get-help/hire-a-toilet-aid](https://www.redcross.org.uk/get-help/hire-a-toilet-aid)

Urine (wee) infections

a wee infection may make you **feel dizzy or confused**. If your wee is cloudy or smelly you may have an infection, contact your GP practice for advice.

Tablets to help pass wee

You may have been prescribed tablets to help your wee flow if you have 'prostate' problems. If these are making you feel dizzy or unsteady please speak to your nurse or GP.

Tablets to control the urge to wee

Tablets are sometimes prescribed to help control the urge to wee, if you take these do they help? If they are not making a difference, ask your pharmacy or GP about whether you should stop taking them.



Medications can have side effects like dizziness which can increase your risk of a fall.

Check to see if your medication increases your risk of a fall

- If you are taking any of the medication below, **ask your pharmacist** (also called chemist) about the effects they can have, the dosage and any precautions you should take:
 - Blood pressure tablets
 - Heart medicines
 - Muscle relaxers
 - Laxatives
 - Sleeping tablets
 - Painkillers
 - Antihistamines
 - Diuretics or water tablets

Remember, **do not stop taking any prescribed medication without speaking to your GP first**. These have been prescribed to you to help manage your condition(s).

Have regular medication reviews

- If you are taking medication on a regular basis, then these should be **regularly reviewed by a health professional**.
- Taking more than four medicines can increase your risk of having a fall. Ensure that a pharmacist or GP has reviewed your medications in the last **six months** to check they are still the most effective for you.



Alcohol

Alcohol can increase your risk of a fall by affecting your **balance**, or by contributing to dehydration.

Alcohol **mixed with some medication** can further increase your risk of having a fall. Be aware of these increased effects alcohol. If the medication's safety information or a health professional advises against drinking alcohol while on your medication, then please refrain from drinking.

Tip: Sleep medication

Medicines to help you sleep should not be taken for long periods, ask your nurse or GP for help in stopping them.



Changes in blood pressure or losing your balance can lead to falls if you're not careful.

Take things slow when standing up

- Blood pressure (BP) can **change suddenly** from when you are lying down then moving to standing or sitting.
- **Move slowly** standing up or getting out of bed to avoid feeling dizzy or sick.

Be careful when carrying objects

- Carrying objects can **put you off balance**. Avoid carrying heavy items and make sure to distribute the weight on both sides.
- **Ask for help** moving large objects, or take several trips if it is possible.
- Be **careful carrying items** like laundry **on stairs**. Don't carry too much. Try using a carrier bag or anything with straps you can rest on your shoulders. That way you can hold onto the stair rail with both hands.

Take care when reaching for items

- **Reaching for items** high up in cupboards, bookshelves etc. can put you off balance.
- Keep items you use regularly **within easy reach**. Avoid using shelves you need to stretch to reach or that require a step stool.



Bed safety

If your bed is too high or too low, or your mattress too soft it will be difficult for you to get in and out of bed and you may fall (The usual bed height is 18 inches).

If you sit on the edge of your bed and your feet are flat on the floor and your knees are in line with your hips, then your bed height is correct for you.

Tip: Bone health

Bones become more brittle and fragile as you get older. They can be protected by taking Calcium & Colecalciferol (Vitamin D) tablets. Ask a pharmacist or your GP about taking these supplements regularly.



□ Use good lighting at night

- **Poor lighting** is often the cause of a fall. Make sure there is enough lighting to help you move safely from one place to another.
- Some energy saving bulbs are **slow to produce a lot of light**. If these are in places like bathrooms, stairs and hallways, change to instant lighting to help you see better, alternatively leave them switched on.
- Make sure switches and cord pulls are **within easy-reach** during the night. A bedside lamp or a night light could be left on overnight. Have a torch close by.

□ Take care when exposed to direct sunlight or bright light

- bright lights like direct sunlight can **temporarily impair your vision**.
- On sunny days, if any of your rooms suffer from **daylight glare**, take extra care moving around.
- Remember **natural light is good** for you so try not to shut it out.

□ Do you need glasses or make sure you are using the correct ones

- For regular eye checks, please visit a local optician. If you can't leave your home, optometrists offer home eye tests. Find out about free NHS eye tests and eligibility here: www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/opticians
- Make sure your glasses **fit properly** and are regularly cleaned. Keep them in a **regular place** within easy reach so you know where to find them.
- Wear the correct glasses **for the task** i.e. reading glasses for all close work only. Do not walk around in reading glasses.
- Ensure all your glasses are clearly **labelled** as i.e. reading/distance/TV.



Exercise can improve strength, co-ordination, balance and reduce your risk of having a fall.

□ Exercise regularly

- Increasing activity **boosts strength and balance** and can help with mobility.
- There are **many different exercises** you can take up, depending on your abilities, interests and budget. These range from walking and exercises at home, to classes in gyms and community centres.
- If you have mobility issues, **speak to a physiotherapist or your GP first** about options that will work for you. Talk to your GP practice's reception team about your needs and they will be able to direct you to the right professional.
- If you are starting a new activity, seek advice or classes from a **professional instructor**. They can make sure you do the exercises correctly and avoid any injury.

□ Using equipment to help with mobility

- Equipment can help you with moving safely. If you have **problems with mobility**, talk to a physiotherapist or your GP about what equipment might be right for you.
- If you already use equipment, **check for wear and tear** on of the rubber feet, hand grips and underarm pads to see if they need replacing. Make sure equipment is regularly maintained.
- If you're needs have changed, then contact your physiotherapist or equipment supplier.

Keep Able like Mabel

The Find Your Active Fall-Proof resources are a series of movements to do whilst at home during your normal daily routine.

Regardless of your age, these simple movements will support you in completing every day jobs, and help keep you steady, strong.

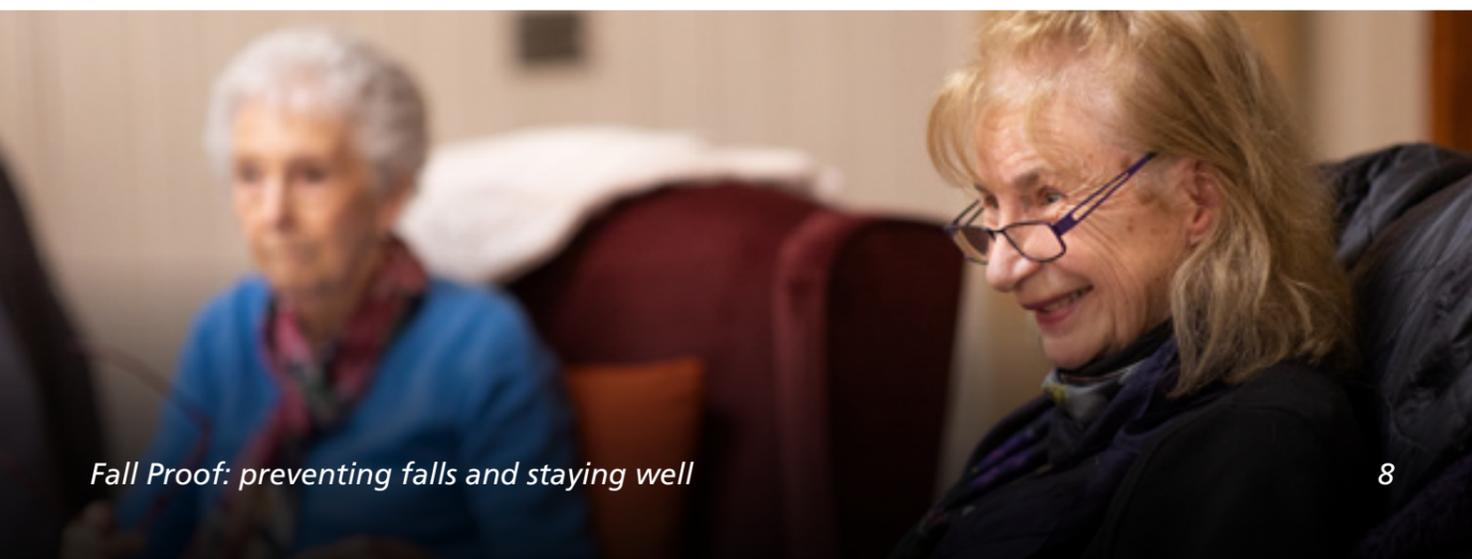
Movement and exercise can seem daunting as you get older, but the Able like Mabel resources can give you the know-how to help you become fitter and stronger.

Read more here: activeessex.org/able-like-mabel



i Tip: Equipment for mobility

- Walking sticks and frames
- Hand and grab rails
- Stairlifts
- Wheelchairs
- sock aids





Cuppa routine

How many cups of tea and coffee do you make every day?

How about using the two minutes it takes for the kettle to boil to do some simple exercises that can make a difference to your strength and balance.

The act of switching on the kettle acts as a trigger to remind you to do a simple routine. Other regular triggers could be brushing your teeth, checking your phone or emails, and switching on the television. Anything you do regularly each day can be a reminder.

Even two minutes of exercise can make a big difference. The Move it or Lose it website (moveitorloseit.co.uk/cuppa) has info on four exercises you can do and shows you how to do them properly:

- **Side leg raises** to strengthen the hips and bottom muscles which are vital for balance
- **Chair raises** to strengthen the thigh muscles to help with stair climbing and walking
- **Arm raises** strengthen the arms and shoulders to help with everyday tasks such as housework and gardening
- **Heel raises** strengthen the ankles and calf muscles to improve balance and walking

You can also find other ways to get moving on:

- NHS website nhs.uk/better-health/get-active
- Active Essex activeessex.org/find-your-active

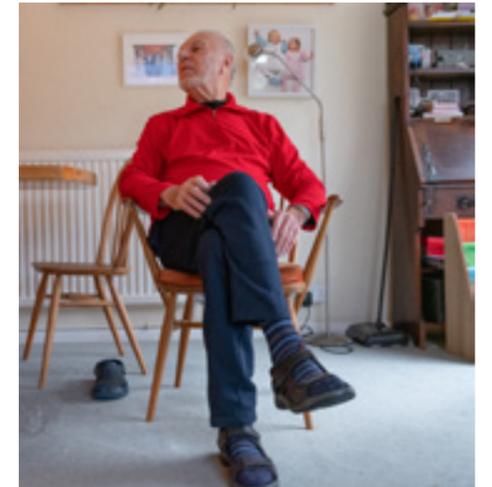


Slips and spills

- Liquids on the floor or other surfaces carry the risk of slips. The kitchen and bathroom are areas of high risk of spills.
- Clean up food and liquid spills in the kitchen as soon as possible and avoid walking on the floor while it is wet.
- Use non-slip mats in the bathroom, in your bathtub and shower. Handrails can also help to prevent slips or falls when getting in and out of baths.
- If there is ice or frost outside in your garden or driveway, ask yourself if it is necessary for you to go outside or if it can wait until it has thawed.

Make sure you are wearing appropriate slippers or shoes

- Poorly fitting footwear will increase your falls risk.
- Avoid backless slippers, make sure your footwear fits properly and has a non-slip sole.
- Shoelaces can become a trip hazard, try slip on shoes instead.
- Avoid walking in socks or tights as these are more slippery.



Remember to speak to a physiotherapist or your GP first before trying new routines if you have mobility, strength or balance issues.

i Tip: visiting a chiropodist

Do you suffer from corns or callouses, pain in your feet that make walking difficult? If so speak to a chiropodist for advice.



Able like Mabel.

We have a range of easy to follow exercises that can be done alongside daily routines such as boiling the kettle to increase your strength and balance, keeping you steady, strong and able to get out and about and increasing your independence.

Visit www.activeessex.org/find-your-active to find out more.