Exercise for falls prevention

Why is falls prevention important?

Falling over could cause injury, pain, loss of confidence, and fear of falling. These factors in turn can reduce activity levels, quality of life, and independence.

Almost 75% of people report slips, trips, and loss of balance as the cause of their fall. The good news is that these factors can be dramatically improved. Strength, flexibility, balance, and reaction time are the easiest risk factors to address.

Am I at risk of falling?

Being at risk, does not mean you will have a fall.

If you have one or more of the following risk factors, you can take action to address them. Take extra care when completing certain tasks too.
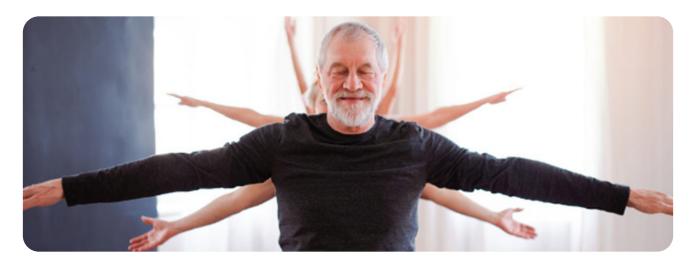
The risk factors for falls include:

- Poor balance
- A history of falls
- Slow reaction time
- Muscle weakness
- Poor eyesight
- Limited mobility and/or reduced sensation in your legs and feet
- Medical conditions (e.g. stroke and Parkinson's disease)

How can I prevent a fall?

Your risk of falling can be significantly reduced by:

- Staying active through safe exercise programs that include strength and balance training.
- Regular sight and hearing tests.
- Taking your time. Getting up quickly can sometimes make you feel wobbly or lightheaded.
- Reviewing medication side effects with your doctor.
- Removing trip hazards and being careful on slippery floors.
- Choosing the right footwear with non-slip soles. Avoid walking in socks, shoes, or slippers with smooth soles.
- Always seeking medical attention if you've had a fall, even if you aren't hurt and feel okay.

Exercise to prevent falls

Getting older could mean that even the thought of exercising is challenging. You might not know the safest way to start a new routine. You might worry about your body or your balance. You might be living with pain or a chronic condition.

There are lots of ways to address these concerns so that you can feel the benefit of regular exercise.

Speak to your doctor for exercise advice. Visit an allied health professional for guidance and support. Join a condition specific exercise class. Take advantage of local community groups. Try some low-risk exercises at home. You'll be surprised how quickly you notice an improvement!

Balancing exercises are very important for falls prevention. It's also important to practice strengthening exercises. These improve muscle stability, which is key for good balance.

Regular, ongoing practice is the most effective. Try a safe routine that gradually becomes more challenging over time.

Some examples of falls prevention exercises include:

- Heel-to-toe walking
- Sideways leg raises
- Sit-to-stand transitions
- Heel and toe raises
- Alternate knee lifts

Tai Chi is also shown to improve balance. In a large scientific review, Tai Chi was found to successfully prevent falls and decrease the rate of falls in older people. Tai Chi becomes more effective for falls prevention with increased practice.

Falls are preventable no matter your age. By exercising regularly, your strength, mobility, and balance can improve even after having a fall.

Here are some helpful tips for practicing falls prevention exercises:

- Move slowly.

- Stop if you feel faint or experience sharp pains.

- Complete the exercise near a wall or somewhere that offers support for the hands if needed.

- Learn what to do if you have a fall and how to get up off the floor.

Where do I start?

You could try:

- Finding group classes that include balance and strength exercise in your local community by taking the [LiveUp quiz](#).

- Start attending local social activities to help you move more.

- Find out more about assistive products for falls prevention.

- Take the LifeCurve to find out how you're ageing and receive personalised advice.

- Seek advice form a health professional about falls prevention.

CONTACT US

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