

# Mind Your Step

A guide for care home residents and their families  
and friends to reduce falls



## Why is Falls Reduction so important in Care Homes?

It is important to take falls seriously because of their impact on your health and wellbeing. Falls can't always be prevented but there are many simple things that you can do to promote your health and to try to reduce the risk of falls and injury.

Care staff should undertake a regular Falls Risk Assessment and develop a Falls Care Plan with you. This should be updated on a regular basis to help reduce your risk of falls and injury.

Please let care staff know if you had falls before you moved into the Care Home or if you are fearful of falling.



# What can I do?

## 1. Keep active

It is important for you to keep as active as possible while maintaining your safety.

- Regular activity can help to keep your muscle and bone strength. It can help improve balance, stamina and flexibility, as well as reduce joint pain and maintain brain health.
- There is evidence that taking part in regular activity especially strength and balance-based exercises can reduce the risk of falls. Remember - if you don't use it, you lose it!
- Care staff can help support you to maintain your activity levels.
- Just a little more movement every day - even small increases in activity can help to slow or prevent further decline.
- If staff recommend that you need assistance when moving, remember to ask them for help.
- Take your time when standing up or getting out of bed so you can get your balance.
- If you have a walking aid (e.g. stick, zimmer) – please ensure you use it. Keep it within easy reach when you are sitting down/lying in your bed.
- The Care Home may have group physical activity sessions, which you can join in with. If appropriate, individual exercises may help to improve your mobility and balance.  
Care staff can discuss this with you and may refer you to a physiotherapist, if required.

## 2. Live Well



### Taking medicines safely

- You may be taking medications from your GP. Look out for any side effects such as dizziness, light-headedness, drowsiness, disturbed balance or new /increased confusion. Speak to Care Staff if you have any concerns.
- Certain medicines such as those which cause drowsiness, lower blood pressure or lower blood sugars can increase the risk of falling, especially if you are taking multiple medicines. (see the Manage my meds - for patients and carers resource on the further information page).
- Take medicines as prescribed. Care staff can help you with taking your medications and arrange a medication review if needed.
- Check with care staff before taking any 'over the counter' medications or supplements that you can buy without a prescription, as these can have an effect on other medication you are taking.

### Eat and drink well

- It is important that you eat regular healthy balanced meals and drink plenty of water to maintain healthy bones and have enough energy to be active.

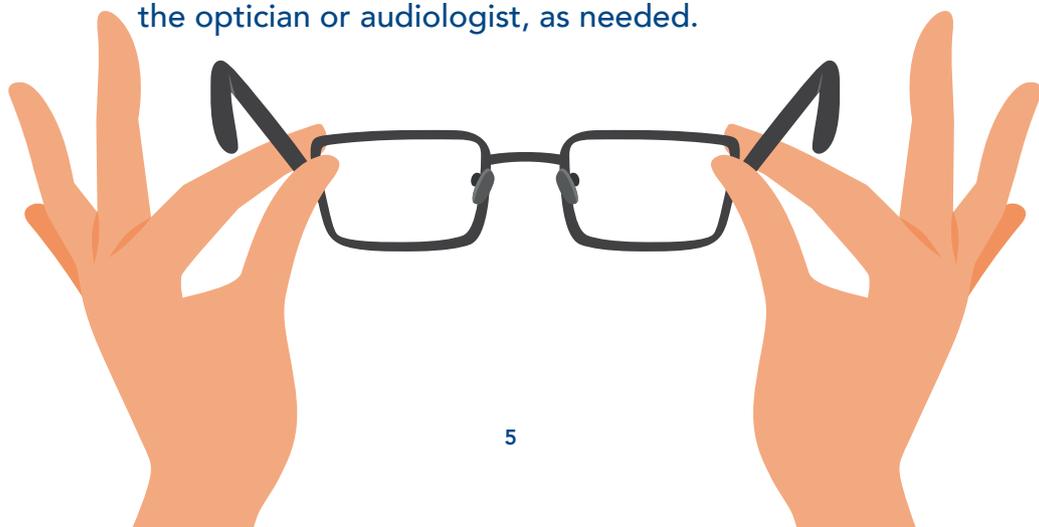


Aim for 6-8 glasses of water per day to keep hydrated as this will help prevent urine infections. If you have been advised on any fluid restriction, please follow the advice.

- Drinking alcohol can lead to reduced co-ordination, balance and judgement and can exaggerate the effects of some medicines. Consider avoiding alcohol or reduce the amount you drink to reduce your falls risk.

## Look after your vision and hearing

- Wear your prescribed glasses and make sure that they are clean and comfortable. Care staff can help you access an optician for regular eye tests. If you wear bifocals/ varifocals these can sometimes cause difficulties with mobility due to the depth of your vision becoming distorted. Discuss this with care staff who can organise an optician's appointment to review your glasses.
- If you find seeing what you are eating difficult wear your reading glasses rather than your distance glasses during mealtimes to see if this helps
- Wear your prescribed hearing aid/s. Care staff can help put them on each morning and check that they are working properly.
- If you are having problems with your vision or hearing, discuss it with the care staff who can organise referrals to the optician or audiologist, as needed.





## Look after your foot health

- Wear shoes or slippers with a non-slip sole that are well fitting and supportive-especially round the heel and ankle area. Footwear should support and protect the feet and allow natural movement during walking. Poorly fitting footwear can cause sore feet, unsteadiness and falls.
- Ensure that socks/ hosiery are not too tight and that they do not rub/dig into your feet/legs.
- Check your feet daily or ask care staff for help if you find this difficult. Report any wounds or areas of pain, redness, discolouration or swelling to care staff.
- Do not walk around with bare feet or in socks / hosiery as this may cause you to slip.
- Take care of your feet by trimming your toes nails regularly - ask care staff if you need help with this. Care staff can arrange for a podiatrist to treat your feet if this is needed.

## Look after your bladder and bowel health

- Sometimes you may experience a sudden uncontrollable urge to rush to the toilet or may need to visit the toilet more often. Talk to Care staff about any concerns you may have around your toilet habits as there may be options to help. Consider the use of easily removed/ adjustable clothing to help you.
- If you are experiencing constipation or diarrhoea, mention it to the care staff who may help you to manage this.

## Living well with cognitive impairment or dementia

Living with cognitive impairment or dementia can lead to an increase risk in falls due to:

- Problems with balance and mobility.
- Problems with memory and processing which can make moving around their home difficult.
- Stress or distress which can lead to an urge to walk.

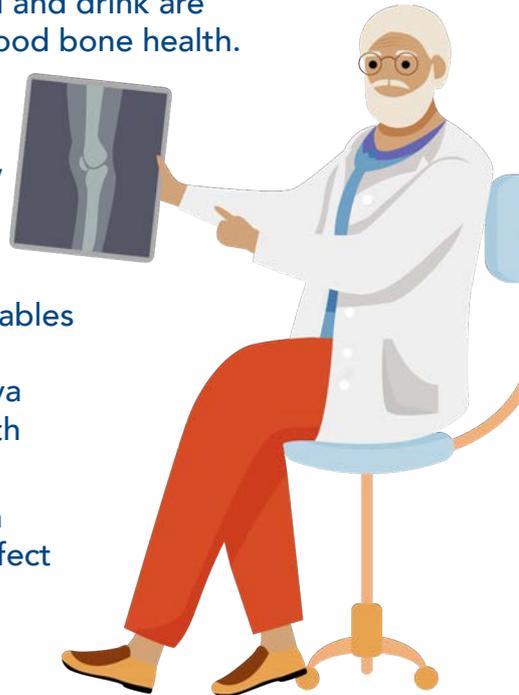
**Supporting safe mobility and activity can help reduce the risk of falls.**

## Look after your bone health

- If your bones are strong and healthy they are less likely to break.
- Sometimes, you may be prescribed medication from your GP to help with your bone health.
- Discuss with the staff what food and drink are recommended for promoting good bone health.

For example, reducing drinks containing caffeine and fizzy drinks. Instead have milkshakes, still juices, caffeine free drinks or water. Also eating a diet continuing dairy (milk, cheese, and yoghurt), green leafy vegetables (broccoli, cabbage and okra), fish (sardines and pilchards), soya beans, tofu and bread made with fortified flour.

- Smoking and drinking too much alcohol can have a damaging effect on your bones.



### 3. Stay well

- As you get older you may need to adapt your environment to suit your needs.
- Care staff can discuss the layout of your bedroom with you, ensuring that you have adequate space to move around.
- Make sure that items are stored at an accessible height for you, so you are not bending down or over-reaching for things.
- Report any uneven flooring or slippery/wet surfaces to care staff.
- Ensure that your room is free from clutter and there are no trip/entanglement hazards e.g. trailing wires.
- Care staff can ensure your bed, toilet and chair are at the best height for you.
- If you struggle with opening/closing doors or windows, ask care staff to help you with this.
- Ask for help from the care staff to do the things you are unable to do safely yourself.
- Ensure good levels of lighting day and night.
- Remove mats and rugs as these can increase your risk of trips and falls.
- If you need to get up during the night; put your light on, put on your slippers, put on your glasses (if you wear them). Sit for a moment on the side of your bed and try to move your legs in a slow marching action before standing up slowly. If you need help from staff, use your buzzer to call them and wait for them to help you.

## Aids/adaptions/ Equipment

- You may need extra aids or supports in place to help you if your needs change.
- If you forget to use your nurse call buzzer and are at risk of falls, care staff may discuss with you about putting a 'falls alert' alarm (e.g. motion sensor, bed or chair alarm) in place. These alarms will alert the staff that you are on the move/getting up from your chair or bed if you forget to use your buzzer.
- Other equipment may be used including bedrails, electric low beds, protective mats on the floor. Care staff would discuss with you/your family if they feel that these options may be suitable for you.
- Care staff will undertake a risk assessment and they will update this regularly, which will help the staff and you to decide whether it is safe to use the equipment or not.

### Remember to tell care staff if you:

- Have a fall (tell them what happened and if you have hurt yourself)
- Feel anxious/fearful of falling
- Feel dizzy or lightheaded
- Have palpitations
- Have pain or difficulty passing urine or need to go to the toilet more often than usual
- Feel muddled or not your usual self.

**Remember that there are many things you can do to reduce your risk of falls.**



## What can family and friends do to help reduce the risk of falls?

- Before leaving your relative/friend, ensure that the area is uncluttered and put your chair safely away.
- Place the nurse call buzzer within easy reach of your friend/relative.
- Let care staff know you are leaving especially if your loved one can become anxious when you leave.
- Speak to the care staff about any worries and concerns that you have.



## Further information on Falls Reduction:

- **Up and About**, taking positive steps to avoid trips and falls. From Age Scotland and Public Health Scotland:

🌐 [www.publichealthscotland.scot/media/22292/up-and-about-taking-positive-steps-to-avoid-trip-and-falls-english-sep-2023.pdf](http://www.publichealthscotland.scot/media/22292/up-and-about-taking-positive-steps-to-avoid-trip-and-falls-english-sep-2023.pdf)



- 🌐 [www.nhsinform.co.uk/falls](http://www.nhsinform.co.uk/falls)



- Read more about physical activity guidelines for older adults at:

🌐 [www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/physical-activity-guidelines-older-adults/and-care-about-physical-activity-in-care-homes-in-scotland.pdf](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/physical-activity-guidelines-older-adults/and-care-about-physical-activity-in-care-homes-in-scotland.pdf)



- Falls: Information for friends and family:

🌐 [www.careinspectorate.com/images/documents/2802/Falls%20leaflet.pdf](http://www.careinspectorate.com/images/documents/2802/Falls%20leaflet.pdf)



- 'Why moving more is important for your older relative' from the Care Inspectorate:

🌐 [www.careinspectorate.com/index.php/guidance/9-professional/2615-care-about-physical-activity](http://www.careinspectorate.com/index.php/guidance/9-professional/2615-care-about-physical-activity)



- Manage my meds - for patients and carers - Right Decisions

🌐 <https://rightdecisions.scot.nhs.uk/manage-my-meds-for-patients-and-carers/>



## Acknowledgements:

- GreenFInCHES Falls Prevention In Care Homes leaflet
- Staying Active: avoiding slips, trips and falls whilst in hospital. An information leaflet for patients, relatives and carers. NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde.
- [www.nhs.uk/conditions/falls/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/falls/)
- Preventing Falls. Care Inspectorate, NHS Education for Scotland
- Falls: Information for friends and family. Care Inspectorate/ NHS Scotland.
- Falls Local Community Support, NHS Forth Valley.
- 'Why moving more is important for your older relative'. Care Inspectorate.

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