



Falls Prevention

What you need to know and what you can do about it.

Falls can cause serious harm and are more common in older adults

Finding

All sections of the population are at risk of falls. Some are more at risk than others, for example, older adults over 65 years or individuals with a physical or cognitive/intellectual disability.

The evidence indicates that over one third of all older adults considered a low risk will fall each year.

Finding

Low falls (falls from less than two metres from the ground) account for 82% of all major trauma in Ireland in the population aged over 65 years.

Finding

The proportion of older people is rapidly increasing.

The number of older adults in Ireland is set to double in the next 25 years, with the greatest increase expected in those over 85 years.



Exercise can help prevent falls

Finding

Maintaining muscle strength and physical health is key to reducing your falls risk. Research shows that exercise which focuses on your strength, balance and that helps you move better in daily life, can reduce falls by over 35%.

What you can do

Doing more than 3 hours of the right kind of exercise each week can reduce the risk of falls by over 35% and build confidence, especially for those with weak muscles or poor balance.

Ask your GP or physiotherapist for more information.



Nutrition

Finding

Keeping your bones healthy can make a big difference to the harm caused by a fall. Calcium, protein and vitamin D are essential to maintain healthy bones and muscle mass and therefore reduces the risk of osteoporosis and falling.

What you can do

Eating well is important for your health and can also help prevent falls. Older adults should have 3–4 servings of milk, yogurt, or cheese each day and include protein-rich foods in their meals throughout the day.

What you can do

Daily or weekly vitamin D supplements should be taken by all older persons unless contraindicated.



You are more likely to fall at home

Finding

70% of all falls occur in the home - where we spend much of our time, and tend to move around without thinking about our safety.

What you can do

If you are at high risk of falls (i.e. history of falling in past year, hospitalisation for a fall, severe visual impairment or functional decline) you should have a home hazard assessment and intervention completed by a registered occupational therapist. You can ask your GP or Public Health Nurse about this.



What you can do

If you are not a high risk, please scan the QR Code on this leaflet to get a Home Safety Checklist for you to use at home.

You can then consider looking at your home and addressing potential hazards, enabling you to live safely in your home.

Medicines

Finding

Certain prescribed medications can increase the risk of a fall.

What you can do

You should get your prescribed and non-prescribed medication reviewed regularly.



What you can do

Talk to your GP or pharmacist if you think your medication may be making you dizzy or drowsy or more likely to fall.

Vision

Finding

Poor vision can often lead us to trip and fall. Some eye conditions increase with age and early detection is important.

What you can do

Get your eyesight checked regularly.



Footwear

Finding

Poorly fitting footwear can increase your risk of falls.

What you can do

Ensure your footwear fits well, fastens securely, has a roomy toe box, flexible non-slip sole and good ankle/heel support.



Further Information

Developed as part of the Falls Prevention Framework for Community Services Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Monaghan, Sligo For further information including references, please scan the QR Code or email: edel.brennan@hse.ie
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