

Falls Prevention

For people who have had a fall
or may be at risk of falling



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www.st-gemma.co.uk



**St. Gemma's
Hospice**

Always caring

If you have previously had a fall, or are struggling with your mobility, there are several things you may be able to alter in your environment or lifestyle to reduce your risk of falling.

Environment

Flooring:

- Take up any small mats which may cause you to trip and repair any areas of carpet where you might catch your foot.
- Ensure stair carpet is firmly fixed.
- Avoid using slippy lino.
- Patterned carpets can be a hazard as it is more difficult to see objects on the floor or lumps/creases which could cause you to trip.

Furniture:

- Stand for a while before you set off walking after getting up from your chair.
- Move items of furniture towards the sides of the room so that you have clear pathways to rooms and the outside doors.
- Ensure your chair is high enough for you to get out of easily



It may be helpful to fit rails:

- Steps to front / back door.
- Two banister rails up the stairs.
- Beside the toilet.
- Beside the bath.

Trailing Wires

- Reposition telephones, heater or lamps that have wires crossing your pathway.
- Oxygen tubing should be properly secured around the room.

Bathroom

- Use bath seats and a non-slip rubber bath mat.
- Consider a commode or urinal bottle for night-time use.
- A raised toilet seat will help you get off the toilet more easily.

Reaching:

- Keep all regularly used items within easy reach.
- Do not stand on steps / chairs, etc.
- Use an Easi-reach to pick up small items from the floor.

Bed:

- Keep bedding off the floor to avoid catching your foot.
- When getting up from the bed sit for a while before standing to avoid dizziness.
- Ask for a bed aid if it is difficult to stand from the bed.

Clothing & Footwear:

- Wear shorter nightwear to avoid tripping, especially when climbing stairs.
- Sit to dress and undress wherever possible.
- Use a sock or tights aid and a long handled shoe horn to avoid bending.
- Consider elastic shoelaces or velcro fastening shoes.
- Ensure footwear is well-fitting and has grips on the soles to avoid slipping.

Lighting

- 100 watt bulb at the top and bottom of the stairs.
- Bedside lamp.
- Nightlight or low energy light left on all night in bedroom or on the landing.
- Handy torch in case of power cut.

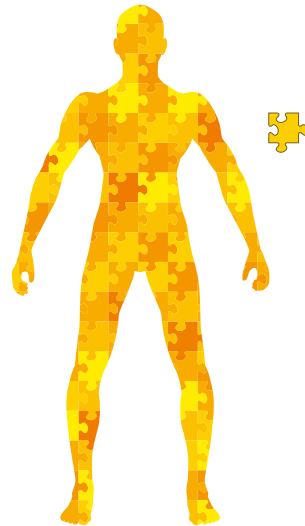
An Occupational Therapist will be able to advise you on making your environment as safe as possible.



Looking after yourself

Eyesight:

- Have your eyes tested annually.
- Is a new prescription causing any difficulties ?
- If so return to your optician to discuss these problems.
- If you need to wear glasses wear them, even before getting out of bed during the night.
- Keep your spectacles clean.
- When not in use keep them in a case to avoid scratching the lens. Scratched lenses increase the problem of glare and can reduce vision.
- If you are unable to travel to an optician request a home visit.
- Bifocals or varifocals can be a hazard when walking as they may blur your line of sight when looking down.



Hearing:

- Problems with your ears and hearing can contribute towards reduced balance.
- Do you have any problems hearing normal conversations? Ask your GP about a hearing test.
- Do you experience any dizziness on standing? Discuss with your GP.

Foot Care:

Your feet are important! Keep them in good condition so that foot discomfort does not put you at risk of falling.

- Wash your feet daily if you can in warm soapy water.
- Use moisturiser on any dry areas but not between the toes.
- When cutting toe nails cut them straight across to avoid in-growing toe nails.

If you cannot reach your feet or you have corns or other foot problems you may need to see a chiropodist.

How to contact a chiropodist:

Talk to a nurse who can refer you to a NHS chiropodist for a free assessment. You may be entitled to free treatment or you may need to see a private practitioner, the chiropodist will tell you at the assessment.

If you are housebound and unable to travel to the clinic, the chiropodist can visit you at home. However, you may have to wait for some time before getting an appointment or may wish to have private treatment.

Continence Problems:

Q. Do you need to rush to go to the toilet or to go more frequently than you used to?

Q. Do you need to go to the toilet several times each night? Then you may need to talk to the nurse.
The Nurse may :

- Test for infection.
- Discuss any gynaecological or prostate problems.
- Ask you to drink more.
- Suggest you have your last drink no later than 1 hour before you go to bed.
- Suggest switching to decaffeinated drinks (e.g. tea & coffee).
- Suggest the use of protective covers on the bed or the easy chair.
- Discuss the range of protective garments.
- Discuss the effects of your medication, e.g. diuretics.
- Discuss having a bedside commode or urine bottle for night time use.

Nutrition:

- You may become light headed because of not eating or drinking enough.
- If you cannot manage full meals try to eat little and often by having snacks and milky drinks.
- If you are anaemic try to have a varied diet including fortified breakfast cereals, red meat, corned beef, pulses, fruits and vegetables including baked beans.
- Having enough calcium and vitamin D is important to keep your bones strong and prevent fractures. The best sources of calcium are dairy products including milk cheese and yoghurt, bony fish such as sardines and salmon and baked beans. The best source of vitamin D is sunshine. It is also in margarine and oily fish.

Medicines:

- Certain medicines may increase risk of falls. Speak to your Nurse/Doctor or Pharmacist who will know which ones they are and be able to review them for you.

Keeping Active:

The NHS recommends adults at risk of falls should do exercises to improve balance and co-ordination on at least two days a week. Examples include Yoga & Tai Chi and dancing.

Benefits of exercise

- Increase muscle power.
- Improve co-ordination.
- Improve balance.
- Strengthen bones.
- Keep heart and lungs in good condition.
- Increase confidence.
- Maintain independence.

Mobility Aids :

- Walking aids should be the correct length with a good rubber grip on the end, ask the physiotherapist to check.
- A range of walking aids (sticks, elbow crutches and frames) are available to assist your mobility.
- You will need to be assessed individually for your walking aid by your physiotherapist.

What to do if you fall

If you are unable to get up:

- Use your pendant alarm.
- Shuffle to the phone.
- Bang on the wall or floor.
- Shout for help.
- Shuffle to a carpeted area if on cold lino.
- Pull the bed clothes off the bed, or the mat off the floor, or the ironing or newspaper off the chair to cover yourself with.

Do not stay in the same position :

- Moving helps you to keep warm and avoids ulcers and sores developing on your skin.

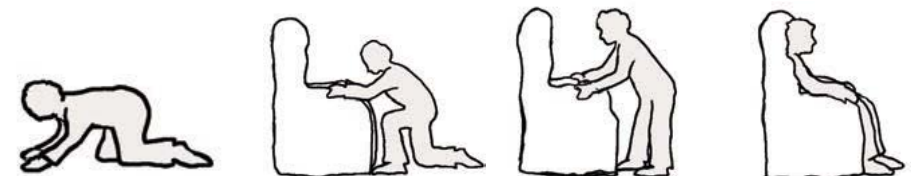
If you need to empty your bladder :

- Use something like a towel or newspaper to soak up some of the wetness and try to move to a dry area of the floor.

How to get up:

Give yourself time to recover a little. Try this...

- Roll onto your hands and knees. Crawl to a **stable** piece of furniture that you can use to help you
- Holding on to the support and keeping one knee on the floor, bring one foot toward
- Push down on to the front foot as you steady yourself with your hands on the support and rise into standing
- Turn round and sit down to rest
- Alert someone that you have fallen



Calling for help:

Telephones:

- If possible have several telephones, eg. one in the bedroom on the bedside table as well as one beside your chair or consider a mobile phone which you can take with you at all times.
- Make sure you could reach the phone if you were on the floor.
- Do not rush to answer the phone.
- Dial 1471 to find out who rang.

Pendant Alarms:

- Available through your local council scheme at a small charge.
- If you already have one – wear it!
- It is no good if it is on the table or in the biscuit tin and you are on the floor.



Pendant Alarm Pull Cords:

- Can you reach one from the floor?
- Can you reach the bathroom pull cord when sitting on the bottom of the bath?
- If they are neatly tied up out of the way it would be a good idea to allow them to hang down fully.



Telecare Falls Sensors

- There are several pieces of technology available to alert someone when you have fallen. Talk to your Occupational Therapist or nurse who will be able to help source what you need.



Falls Diary:

If you have a fall, please record the following details and show them to your health professional or doctor:

- What was the cause of the fall ?
- What time of day was it when you fell ?
- Where did you fall ?
- What you were doing at the time ?
- How did you feel before the fall ?
- Did you injure yourself ?
- How long were you on the floor ?
- Were you able to get yourself up ?
- What did you do next ?

Further Information:

Falls, staying steady:

Age UK - Tel: 08001696565
www.ageuk.org.uk

Pendant Alarms:

Care Ring Leeds & Telecare

Cross Green Industrial Estate, Knowsthorpe Gate,
Leeds, LS90NP. Tel: 0113 224 3485

Aids to Daily Living:

Yorkshire Care Equipment

6 Over Lane, Rawdon LS19 6DE. Tel : 0113 250 3250
www.yorkshirecareequipment.com

Clarks Independence Centre

71 New Road Side, Horsforth Centre. Tel : 0113 258 8888
www.clarksmobility.com

William Merritt Disabled Living Centre

St. Mary's Hospital, Green Hill Road, Armley, Leeds LS12 3QE.
Tel : 0113 350 8989

Footcare

NHS Podiatry Service - Discuss referral with Nurse or GP

Private Chiropody - See Yellow Pages or internet search.

Cosyfeet - specialist/wide-fitting mail order catalogue for shoes
Tel : 01458 447 275

Diet:

NHS Dietitian

Discuss referral with Nurse or GP

Wiltshire Farm Foods

47 West End Avenue, Harrogate HG2 9BX.
Tel : 01423 566 788

Consider hot meal delivery options available in your local area:

e.g. Community Meals Leeds
(social services) 0113 247 8577
<http://www.leeds.gov.uk/residents/Pages/Preparing-meals.aspx>

Age UK Healthy eating leaflet

www.ageuk.org.uk

Returning Equipment:

If you have equipment on loan from Leeds Equipment Service which are no longer required, you can arrange collection by telephoning:

Leeds Equipment Service. Tel : 0113 378 3282

Continence:

Boots

Larger stores - Protective garments and pads. Catalogues available.

Age UK www.ageuk.org.uk - Help with continence factsheet

Opticians:

Home Visits

To find one willing to visit at home you may have to phone several opticians. Yellow Pages or internet search for details.

Community Groups:

Local Libraries - Have lists of clubs, societies and exercise classes to join.

Local Leisure Centres - Tailored exercise classes and swimming lessons.

Access Bus - Door to door, dial a ride bus. Tel 0113 248 1903

Blue Badge Scheme – 0113 222 4444

or visit your local One Stop Centre
www.leeds.gov.uk/residents/Pages/Blue-badge-parking

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providing expert medical and nursing care to
thousands of local people every year – all free of
charge to patients and their families.**

**If you would like more information about our work, please
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Fundraising:	0113 218 5555
Dales Ward:	0113 218 5510
Moors Ward:	0113 218 5520

A large print version of this booklet is available from the Hospice -
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