

SIX STEPS

TO PREVENTING FALLS

in later life



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INTRODUCTION

Salford has one of the highest rates of falls causing injury and requiring hospital admission amongst older people in Greater Manchester.

Falls are serious at any age, but breaking a bone after a fall becomes more likely as we get older. Even if a bone is not broken after a fall, people become fearful of falling again and this may limit the amount of activity a person feels they can do.

However, falls are preventable and this booklet has been put together to help you as an older person or someone who looks after an older person to reduce the risk of falling.

This booklet sets out six steps to reducing the risk of falling and provides some top tips and links to support.



- Eye checks
- Exercise
- Avoiding home hazards
- Avoiding hazards outside the home
- Right footwear
- Check your medication

EYE CHECKS

Protecting your vision and ensuring proper eye health is one of the most important things you can do to help maintain quality of life as we get older.

Vision changes occur as you get older but they don't necessarily have to compromise your lifestyle or quality of eyesight. Knowing what to expect and when to seek professional care are important steps to safeguarding your vision.



Top tips

- Make sure you have your eyes tested at least once a year
- Anyone over 60 is entitled to a free NHS funded eye sight test at their local optician
- Check the lighting in your home – you may need a higher level of bulb or a side lamp
- Have an annual health check with your doctor
- Ensure your glasses are easy to reach if you need them when you get out of bed

Question

Yes No

Have I had my eyes tested in the last 12 months?

As we get older we should have our eyes tested at least once a year.

Do I need more light to see when I am carrying out tasks?

To see well, your eyes need three times as much light when you're 60 as they did at age 20.

Do I have difficulty reading and doing work up close?

Printed materials are not as clear and it's harder to focus on near objects with the same ability as when younger.

Am I at risk for eye diseases?

Diabetes, high blood pressure or medications that have eye-related side effects can cause vision problems.

Did you know?

Your local optician may be able to offer a free home eye check if you are unable to get to the opticians.

www.mycitysalford.com/directory/health



EXERCISE

If you're fit, you are less likely to fall. Exercise can help to keep muscles strong and improve your balance. Try to do some regular exercise such as: swimming, gardening, walking or dancing. If you haven't exercised for a while, talk to your GP first. They might be able to give you some strength and balance exercises to do at home or recommend a local exercise class.



Top tips

- You should undertake physical activity to improve muscle strength
- You should incorporate physical activity to improve balance and coordination
- You should minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary (sitting) for extended periods

Question

Yes No

Do I spend more time sitting down then doing some form of exercise each day?

Ideally you should aim to do 150 minutes of exercise each week. Try to do something every day, preferably in bouts of 10 minutes of activity or more.

Do I think I am doing exercise already through my daily chores?

Daily chores like shopping, cooking or housework don't count towards your 150 minutes a week because the effort isn't hard enough to raise your heart rate, although they do help break up sedentary (sitting) time.

Do I already do some physical activity every day?

Physical activities should cause you to get warmer, breathe harder and your heart to beat faster.

Did you know?

Salford Community Leisure Active Lifestyles Team offer a range of community based activities.

active.lifestyles@scll.co.uk
0161 778 0577



AVOIDING HOME HAZARDS

Take a look around your home. Your living room, kitchen, bedroom, bathroom, hallways and stairways may be filled with hazards. Keep your home brightly lit to avoid tripping on objects that are hard to see.



Top tips

- Make sure all hallways, stairs and paths are well lit and clear of objects
- Use rails and banisters when going up and down stairs
- Tape rugs to the floor so they do not move when you walk on them
- Put rubber mats in the bath to prevent slipping
- Try not to use extension leads or have trailing wires
- Nightlights are an inexpensive way to provide light to dark passageways at night
- Consider using a cordless telephone. You need to only have one telephone line and can take the phone with you to bed or outside

Question

Yes No

Do you check the rooms in your house are clutter free?

Falls can happen both in the home and outside due to a slip or a trip. Check for trailing wires, any rugs or carpets are in good condition and that you have adequate lighting both during the day and at night.

Do you always wipe up any spills as soon as they happen?

Slips and trips are the most common types of accident at any age.

Do you have a ten year 'toast proof' fire alarm?

You can request a free Home Fire Safety Check and smoke alarm from the local fire brigade. They will come to your home to advise on exit routes in the event of fire and will fit a free smoke alarm if necessary.

Do I have to stretch for things?

Rearrange your cupboards so things you use often are easier to get to.

Did you know?

Your local fire brigade can help with fitting smoke alarms. For a free safe and well visit **call 0800 555 815**

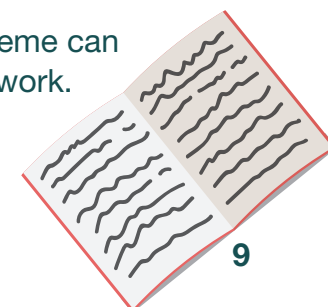
Helping hands' handyperson and minor repair scheme can help with home repairs and building maintenance work.

www.helpinghandssalford.co.uk

0161 793 9419

Care on Call Service is a mobile warden service.

0161 607 7133



AVOIDING HAZARDS OUTSIDE THE HOME

We know that getting out of the house and enjoying the outdoors is good for both our mental and physical health at any age. By being aware of our surroundings we can help to reduce the risk of falling as we get older.



Top tips

- Take a walk with a friend, it's an opportunity to socialise and support each other from hazards
- If you are going outside by yourself, have your mobile phone or pendant with you if you have one
- If using a walking aid, look in the direction straight ahead while walking. Be sure the aid is clear of debris and any grips are in place
- Do not load yourself down with shopping. Take advantage of home delivery or use a trolley
- Take all the time you need, plan ahead, do not rush. Wear footwear to prevent slipping and avoid laces that may come undone

Question

Yes No

Do you keep your outdoor areas clear?

Put your garden equipment away in a secure area when you are not using them and have garden tools handy. Make sure your garden furniture and ornaments are steady and in good repair. Install handrails where there are steps.

Do you have measures in place to look after yourself during the winter?

Keep pathways and steps free of leaves, ice and moss. Make sure you repair cracks in your paving. Install outside lighting so you can see in the dark.

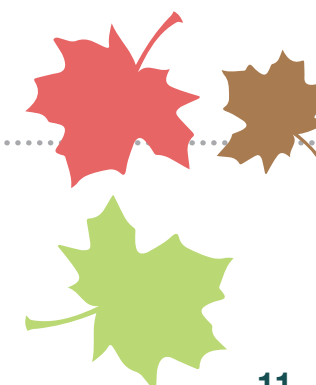
Do you need support when out walking?

Use your walking aid if needed. Walk carefully, be alert of pavement cracks, obstacles, slopes, slippery surfaces and other hazards. Be a defensive walker, watch for traffic and bicycles. Plan your trip so you do not have to go out during the rush hour, darkness or bad weather.

Did you know?

AskSARA helps you find useful information about products that make daily living easier.

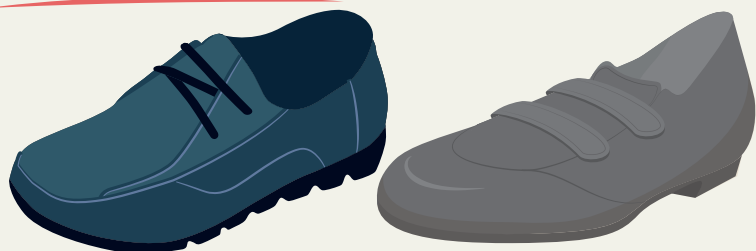
www.asksara.dlf.org.uk



RIGHT FOOTWEAR

A good fastening, good support and a sturdy sole are the most important things to consider when buying shoes and slippers. If you are having problems with your feet you can discuss this with your doctor. You may then be referred for NHS chiropody or podiatry treatment.

WEAR THE RIGHT SHOES



Top tips

- Make sure you cut and file toenails and keep them at a comfortable length
- Check for cracks and breaks in the skin and inflammation such as blisters
- Look for signs of infection like nail fungus or other obvious early problems and seek professional advice
- Wear suitable socks and footwear
- Keep your feet clean, dry, mobile, comfortable and warm. Bedsocks are a good idea
- If it's difficult for you to carry out the above yourself, see a professional chiropodist/podiatrist for help

Question

Yes No

Do I wear slippers indoors and nonslip sole shoes when going outside?

Consider changing your footwear as part of your fall-prevention plan. High heels, floppy slippers and shoes with slick soles can make you slip, stumble and fall. So can walking in your stocking feet.

Instead, wear properly fitting, sturdy shoes with nonslip soles. Sensible shoes may also reduce joint pain.

Do I feel dizzy when standing up or getting out of bed?

Get out of bed slowly – sit up before you stand up to prevent dizziness. Sit down rather than trying to balance on one leg when dressing.

Do I find it hard to cut my toenails?

Trim your toenails regularly using proper nail clippers. Cut straight across, never at an angle or down the edges. This can cause ingrowing toenails.

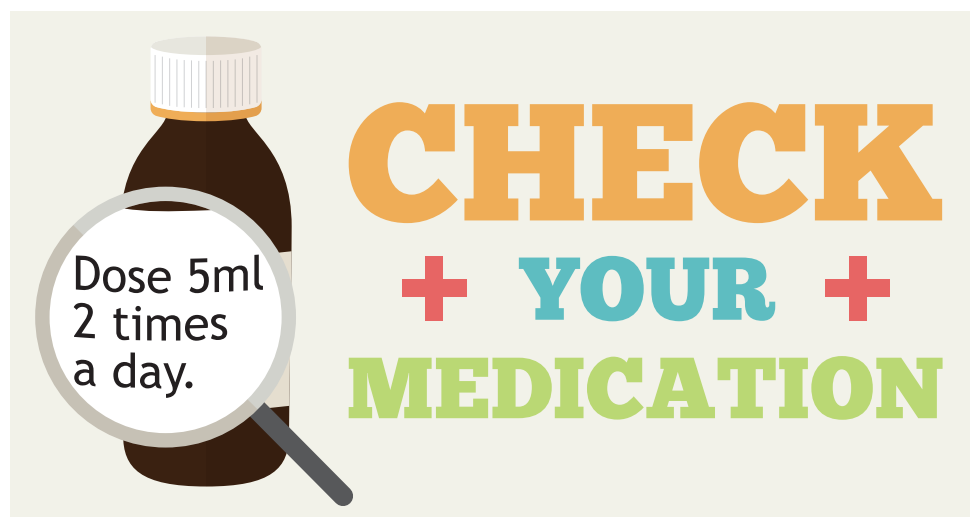
Did you know?

Many companies offer specially designed footwear to fit swollen feet, bunions and problem toes and can be found on the internet. For example, www.cosyfeet.com, www.widerfitshoes.co.uk or www.beggshoes.com



CHECK YOUR MEDICATION

Taking more than three medications can increase the risk of falls due to their side effects. You should arrange to visit your doctor or local pharmacist for a medication review at least once a year. If you are having a hard time keeping track of medicines or are experiencing side effects, discuss your concerns with your doctor and pharmacist.



Top tips

- Ask your Doctor for a medication review at least once a year
- Keep a list of all medications including prescriptions, over the counter medications, vitamins and herbals
- Keep all your medicines in the same place
- Ask questions about your medicines
- Use only one chemist when possible
- Take your medicine according to the directions

Question

Yes No

Do I know what medication I am taking?

Make a list of your prescription and over-the-counter medications and supplements. Your doctor can review your medications for side effects and interactions that may increase your risk of falling.

Do I feel dizzy or lose my balance?

Some medications may have side effects that can affect your balance. Tell your doctor if any of your medication is making you feel dizzy or unwell.

Have I noticed a change in my health since taking a new medication?

You should tell your doctor about any changes in your health and if any medicine makes you feel better or worse. Throw away medicines that are out of date and do not share medicines with family or friends.

Did you know?

Your pharmacist based at your local GP surgery or your local chemist can support you with your medication. You can search for your local pharmacy on the NHS choices website, www.nhs.uk



YOUR HOME SAFETY ACTION PLAN

Having reviewed the status of your home and surrounding environment with regard to falls, you can now take steps to reduce your risk.

Refer back to the pages where you have answered 'no' to any of the questions, note the relevant action from the suggestions area and record these here. You may even think of more actions to add.

Alternatively, highlight the suggestions that relate to you and tick them off as you complete each one.

Action	Comments



NATIONAL LOTTERY FUNDED