

Step safely:

Some simple steps to help prevent falls

Working together to prevent falls



Brochure developed by: Inner East Community Health Service and the Boroondara Primary Care Partnership (the risk assessment checklist has been inserted from a brochure developed by the Monash University Accident Research Centre)

An informative brochure that groups risk factors into seven categories and provides a range of suggestions to address each risk factor. Also included is a falls risk checklist, where a **yes** response to any of the 10 questions in the checklist advises the reader to **read on for further information**.

(Downloadable)

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In 2005 the Department of Human Services funded the National Ageing Research Institute to review and recommend a set of falls prevention resources for general use. The materials used as the basis for this generic resource were developed by the Inner East Community Health Service and the Boroondara Primary Care Partnership under a Service Agreement with the Department of Human Services. The falls risk checklist was taken from a brochure developed by the Monash University Research Accident Centre and funded by EssoMobil. This and other falls prevention resources are available from the department's Aged Care website at: <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/agedcare>.

Quick Falls Risk Checklist

Please circle:

I have fallen in the past 12 months **Yes**
No

I take four or more medications **Yes**
No

I take anxiety or sleeping tablets **Yes**
No

I have osteoporosis **Yes**
No

My balance is not very good **Yes**
No

I suffer from dizziness **Yes**
No

I am not very active **Yes**
No

I have a fear of falling **Yes**
No

My health has worsened recently **Yes**
No

I have trouble remembering things **Yes**
No

If you answered Yes to any of the above please read on for further information.

For further information contact:

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Falls are one of the major causes of injury amongst older people. Approximately one in three people aged 65 and over fall at least once a year.

But the good news is that most falls can be prevented! A few simple steps can catch you before you fall, so you can maintain an independent lifestyle.

1. General health

Some medical conditions can increase your risk of falling, eg. Parkinson's disease; high or low blood pressure; arthritis; and some ear infections can affect balance.

Suggestions:

- Take good care of your health and have regular check ups with your doctor.
- Report any fall and dizziness to your doctor.

2. Medication

Some medicines can make you dizzy, drowsy or unsteady on your feet. Anxiety and sleeping tablets for example can increase your risk of falling.

Suggestions:

- When you receive new medicines ask your pharmacist or doctor if the medicines will make you drowsy, dizzy or affect your vision.
- Try to reduce your need for anxiety and sleeping tablets by learning other ways to relax.
- Avoid taking medicines and alcohol together.

3. Eyesight and vision

When you grow older, it is more difficult to judge distance and depth and it takes longer for your eyes to adjust to different levels of light and dark.

Suggestions:

- Have your eyes tested and your glasses checked at least every year.
- Wait for your eyes to adjust when moving from bright and dark areas.
- Provide enough lighting throughout your home.

4. Exercise and fitness

Regular exercise can improve your joint flexibility, muscle strength and balance. It also helps your bones stay strong.

Suggestions:

- Have at least 30 minutes of moderate activity every day.
- If you have not been exercising regularly see your doctor before starting an exercise program.
- Check with your local activity and leisure centre and find the exercise you enjoy best.
- A physiotherapist can give you more specific guidelines and can prescribe the right exercise for you.

5. Healthy diet

You might not eat as much as you used to, but you still need a good balanced diet with enough variety and quality. Calcium rich foods help bone strength.

Suggestions:

- Drink 6-8 glasses of water every day.
- Choose from each of the 5 food groups every day, including 3 serves of calcium rich food, eg. glass of milk, yoghurt.
- If preparing nutritious meals is a problem, a dietician can help.

6. Feet and footwear

Feet deformities and pain in your feet can affect your balance, and if your shoes don't fit properly you increase your risk of falling.

Suggestions:

- Wear sensible shoes with low, broad heels and non-slip soles.
- See a podiatrist if you have problems with your feet.

7. Home and public safety

A majority of falls occur inside the house or in the immediate surroundings.

Suggestions:

- Remove clutter.
- Hand rails, non-slip surfaces and night-lights will reduce risk of falls.
- An occupational therapist can help you to make your home safer.
- Scan the area ahead of you and slow down when approaching steps and curbs.
- Use the pedestrian crossings and the intersections with lights.
- Report public hazards to your local government.