

We are all capable of taking a tumble but someone of 85 is **FIVE TIMES more likely to fall than a 65-year-old.**

Having a fall can be very frightening. There is the painful risk of breaking a hip or other bone, but in addition, the experience often leads to a loss of confidence which can limit daily activities and threaten someone's general independence.

Why does someone fall?

Feet and footwear

- ill fitting shoes
- the wrong type of shoes
- worn soles

These can all be potentially dangerous.

Older people often shuffle along rather than lift their feet, so are at risk of slipping or 'catching a toe'. Problems with feet may make it uncomfortable to walk, or there may be reduced sensation making it difficult to feel what the feet are touching.

Medications

Certain medications can cause dizziness and loss of balance.

Non-selective beta-blockers – prescribed to control high blood pressure and certain heart conditions – significantly increase the risk of a fall.

Taking a combination of four or more drugs also increases the likelihood of falling.

Poor balance and impaired gait

As we get older and less active our muscles become weaker and our balance worsens.

- inability to walk in a straight line or at a steady speed
- requiring support to walk
- inability to stand on one leg or to sit down in a controlled manner

All can indicate an increased likelihood of falling.

Effects of illness

There are several conditions which increase the likelihood of falling, including:

- Parkinson's disease
- Stroke - especially during the initial recovery period
- Alzheimer's disease - impairs cognitive ability and hazard perception
- Low blood pressure
- Diabetes - low blood sugar levels (hypoglycaemia) cause dizziness

Poor vision

If you can't see obstacles clearly you are more likely to trip over them.

Bifocal and varifocal glasses can also cause problems by distorting view.

Environmental hazards

Most falls occur in the home. Common culprits are:

- trailing flexes
- uneven rugs
- poor lighting/shadow
- general household clutter in passageways
- lack of distinction between ground and steps

Outside, uneven paving or high kerbs can be problematic.

What can you do to prevent falls?

Exercise

Keeping physically active helps maintain strength and agility.

Bone density, stamina and suppleness can all be improved by walking, dancing and/or swimming.

There are a number of BALL groups and **Strength and Balance** groups in Moray, where members undertake gentle exercise to improve their mobility.

For more information contact:

Community Wellbeing Development Team

01343 563510

CWDevelopmentTeam@moray.gov.uk

Diet

A healthy, varied diet with plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables will keep energy levels high and bones and muscles strong.

Removing trip hazards

Prevention is better than cure, so keep a regular eye on any potential areas of concern like the ones mentioned on the previous page

Check for loose carpets, slippy floors, uneven surfaces, ill-fitting slippers...

Make sure areas are well lit and provide handrails where necessary for extra support.

If you are caring for someone with dementia think about the colour contrast between floors and walls and the change in different floor coverings from room to room. These can distort perception hugely and be scary for someone with dementia.

Medication review

You can ask your GP to review medication every six months and report any side-effects such as dizziness and drowsiness.

Foot Care

Make sure that feet are kept comfortable, the correct footwear is employed and that toenails are clipped regularly.

Moray Lifeline and Telecare Service

This Moray Council Social Work service can provide equipment to alert carers to certain situations eg:

Fall detector—a small device worn around the wrist, as a pendant or attached to clothing, to detect a fall and alert either a carer in the home or the 24 hour telecare monitoring centre.

Bed Occupancy Sensor - can alert a carer immediately that a person has got out of bed so they can be on hand to prevent a fall or guide them back to bed.

The sensor can also be set to raise an alert if the person has not returned to bed after a period of time – perhaps because they have fallen and need help.

For more information have a look at:

http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_53754.html

or contact:

Access Care Team
01343 563999
accesscareteam@moray.gov.uk

What to do if someone falls

When someone falls it is not always possible or sensible to try and get them up, especially if you are on your own. You must think of your own back and general safety.

The following are some useful telephone numbers to call for assistance:

IF THERE IS NO OBVIOUS INJURY OR PAIN:

from :

7am to 9am – call 999

9am to 5pm Monday—Friday – call the Falls Team on 01343 563312

5pm to 6.30pm – call 999

6.30pm – 7am and Saturday/Sunday – call Out of Hours 111 (NHS 24)

IF SOMEONE IS INJURED:

Call 999

You'll find useful exercises and information to help avoid slips, trips and falls at the following links:

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/campaigns/falls>

http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_79409.html



Quarriers Carer Support Service (Moray)

232 High Street, Elgin, IV30 1BA

Tel: 01343 556031

Email: carersmoray@quarriers.org.uk

www.quarriers.org.uk/morayvcc

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