



FALLS PREVENTION GUIDE

- Swansea



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CYMRU
NHS
WALES

Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg
University Health Board

This falls prevention guide has been produced by Swansea Council for Voluntary Service in partnership with the ABMU Chronic Condition Management Team.

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Contact SCVS on 01792 544000 / scvs@scvs.org.uk for more information.

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Please note: The information provided in this booklet is intended to help you make an informed decision in relation to your own circumstances. You must consider whether you feel they are the right options for you.

Foreword

This booklet has been put together to provide you with information that will help you to reduce your risk of falling.

There are a number of ways you can keep yourself well and reduce your chances of having a fall, these include:

- Making simple changes to your lifestyle
- Looking after your bones
- Looking after your feet
- Having your vision and hearing checked
- Having your medicines reviewed, and
- Making your home safer
- Seasonal advice

If you have fallen in the past, by making some changes you could reduce your chances of having further falls and also overcome your fear of falling.

Remember, all healthcare professionals take falls in older people very seriously because of the impact it can have on a person's overall health and wellbeing.

Discuss any falls you have had with your GP and mention if it has had any impact on your health and wellbeing. Your GP can carry out simple balance tests to see if you are at an increased risk of falling in the future. They can also refer you to useful services in your local area.

Making simple changes to your lifestyle

Get physical

Your skeleton grows stronger if you do regular weight-bearing exercise.

If you have certain conditions you may need to be careful of vigorous, high impact exercise but it's important to stay active and find something you enjoy. Leading an active lifestyle will ensure you have good balance and co-ordination and will also help to develop muscle strength. Exercises such as Tai Chi may help keep you fit and reduce your risk of falling.

There are different exercise options available, ask your GP to refer you to your local GP referral scheme for advice on which exercises would be best for you. (Please see NERS in Local Service Provision section) Always speak with your health care professional before starting any new activity.

Eat a healthy balanced diet

It is important to eat plenty of calcium to help build or maintain healthy bones, other vitamins and minerals are also important. If you enjoy a wide variety of food you will get a mix of all the vitamins and minerals you need.

The Food Standards Agency advises that a healthy balanced diet has:

- plenty of fruit and vegetables (at least 5 portions a day)
- plenty of starchy foods, such as bread, rice, potatoes and pasta
- wholegrain varieties whenever possible
- some milk and dairy foods
- some meat, fish, eggs, beans, and other non-dairy sources of protein

Information provided by:



Looking after your bones

If you have a condition called osteoporosis, you are more likely to break a bone if you fall. Osteoporosis is called the "silent disease" because bones become weak with no symptoms. You may not know that you have it until a strain, bump, or fall causes a bone to break, that's why it is important to look after your bones.

The factors that can put people at risk of osteoporosis and fractures include:

Genes - Our bone health is largely dependent on the genes we inherit from our parents. In fact, if one of your parents has broken a hip, you may be more susceptible to developing osteoporosis and fragile bones.

Age - Bone loss increases in later life so by the age of 75 about half of the population will have osteoporosis. As we get older bones become more fragile and more likely to break.

Gender - Women have smaller bones than men and they also experience the menopause which accelerates the process of bone turnover. The female hormone oestrogen has a protective effect on bones. At the menopause (normally around the age of 50) the ovaries almost stop producing this hormone reducing the protection it gives to bones.

Low body weight – You are at greater risk of developing osteoporosis if your body weight is too low.

The risk of osteoporosis is higher following wrist, hip or spinal fractures and following long term steroid therapy.

Taking some exercise and ensuring good nutrition can reduce the risks of some conditions and ensure you are at a good weight and may reduce your risk of falling. Please see the making changes to your lifestyle section.

Information provided by:



Looking after your feet

It sounds simple but wearing well fitted shoes and slippers can help to reduce your risk of falls.

Outdoor shoes

Keep your shoes in good condition – check for uneven heel wear or worn soles. If you can, get your feet measured when buying new shoes as your foot shape can change with age. Shoes should be comfortable when you try them on. If your shoes don't fit well they can make even mild foot problems worse. Don't buy them if they're too tight thinking you can break them in. It's a good idea to shop for shoes in the afternoon if your feet swell during the day. You don't have to buy specially-made or expensive footwear, you should be able to find the right shoes at an affordable price. You can also ask your chiropodist for advice on the best footwear for you.

Indoor footwear

Walking indoors in bare feet, socks or tights can increase your risk of falling. Avoid wearing soft, floppy, loose-fitting or open-backed slippers such as mules (slip-ons) because these can cause you to trip.

Look for slippers that have velcro fastening and a lightly cushioned sole, with a high collar at the back that fits snugly around your ankle, helping you to improve stability. Well-fitting shoes provide better support than well-fitting slippers. If you are unsteady on your feet or have already had a fall, consider wearing comfortable shoes at home instead of slippers.

Report any problems with your feet to your GP or practice nurse.

Information provided by:

Staying steady
Keep active and reduce
your risk of falling


ageUK
Love later life

Have your hearing and vision checked

Have your vision checked

Have your eyes checked by an optician at least once a year. You may be wearing the wrong glasses or have a condition like glaucoma or cataracts that limits your vision. Poor vision can increase your chances of falling. (Please see your local optician or RNIB in Local Service Provision section)

Have your hearing checked

About one-third of people over 65 and half of people over the age of 85 have hearing problems. Hearing loss has been associated with a higher risk for falls, and makes it harder to:

- understand people's speech, including instructions from healthcare providers
- hear alarms and warnings
- use the telephone
- socialise

Your healthcare professional can check your ears for such things as wax build up, this kind of thing can make it harder to hear. You should also have your hearing checked by a professional, if you feel that it is not as good as it used to be. Many types of hearing aids are now available and are very effective. Other kinds of devices can be very helpful for different situations.

Information provided by:

Healthinaging.org

Trusted Information. Better Care.

Have your medicines reviewed

Review all the medicines you take, even over-the-counter medicines. As you get older, the way medicines work in your body can change. Some medicines, or combinations of medicines, can make you sleepy or dizzy and can cause you to fall. Ask your GP, local pharmacist or Community/District nurse to review your medicines.

Making your home safer

Most falls occur at home. Stay safe and independent in your home by following these simple instructions.

Keep your path and walkway clear

- Move books, boxes, shoes, clutter and trip hazards out of your path and off the stairs.
- Move extension, appliance and telephones cords that you can trip over.
- If you have pets, be aware of where they are sleeping or lying down.
- Rearrange furniture to allow free access around the home. If the furniture is heavy, ask for help to move it.

Get rid of reasons to slip or trip

- Mats and rugs can be a trip hazard.
- Take your time when moving around your home for example, getting to the phone or answering the door. Rushing may cause you to trip and fall.
- When walking up and down the stairs take your time and use the handrail. If you don't have a hand rail contact the Intake Team or Care and Repair for advice.

Ensure your home is well lit

- Turn the lights on as you move through your home and up and down the stairs. Use the brightest bulbs in kitchens and stairways.
- Use nightlights to brighten bedrooms, halls and bathrooms.
- Have a lamp or torch and your glasses in easy reach of your bed or where you sit, especially in case of power cuts.
- When you go to the toilet at night, **put the light on.**

Making your home safer

Cut down the risks in your daily life

- Be wary of getting out of bed or getting up from a chair when you have been sitting for a long time. If you stand up too quickly, your blood pressure may drop suddenly. This may make you feel light-headed and can cause a fall. Try to stand up slowly and in stages. Before you get up from a chair, try to tense or move your arms and legs a few times first.
- If you have a lifeline, **keep it with you at all times. Lifelines are waterproof so you can use them in the shower or bath.**



Kitchen

- Avoid overstretching or bending.
- Avoid climbing on chairs and stools
- Clean up spills immediately.

Bathroom

- Use slip resistant mats in the bath.
- Use grab rails near the bath and toilet.

Bedroom

- Avoid wearing long nightwear which you may trip over or your movement may be restricted by.
- Avoid leaving books and magazines lying on the floor beside the bed.
- Consider a night light.

Stairs and hallways

- Use the handrails.
- Avoid carrying loads up and down the stairs.

This information has been provided by ABMU and has been adapted from the Minnesota Falls Prevention Service.



Making your home safer

Other things to consider....

- More telephone extensions around the home will stop you rushing to answer the phone. Cordless ones are particularly useful as you can leave them in convenient places.
- A personal alarm system may be a comfort to you and your family. Find out more about these systems by contacting lifeline services. (Speak with the Intake Team for more information).
- If you have a pet, fit a brightly coloured collar or one with a bell, so that you can see or hear them more easily and are less likely to trip over them.
- It is important to ensure your home is fitted with a working fire alarm. Home safety checks are available from the Fire and rescue Service. You can contact them on 0800 169 1234.
- There are some secure and convenient ways of ensuring someone can enter your home should you need it including such people as family, friends or emergency services. You can contact Swansea Care and Repair; their number can be found in local service provision.



Seasonal Advice

Summer

- Stay cool. Sit in the shade and avoid going outside at the hottest part of the day (11am-1pm).
- Keep hydrated by drinking plenty of water. Dehydration can cause dizziness which can result in falls or faints. During hot weather you'll need to drink more water than your thirst indicates. Also avoid alcohol as this dehydrates you.
- Avoid physical exertion and wear light-weight, loose fitting clothes to keep cool.
- If you need to spend time outside wear sun cream as sun burn can cause dehydration.
- Be aware of the symptoms heat stroke or heat exhaustion and cool down and rehydrate if you notice any in yourself.

Winter

- Heat rooms to 18-21°C. Health problems start when heating is below this level. Age Cymru Swansea Bay can provide free thermometer cards to help you monitor the temperature in your home. If you have issues with energy efficiency or heating bills you can contact the **Energy Saving Trust (ESF)** for free and impartial advice on **0800 512 012** or contact **Citizen's Advice** on **08444 77 20 20**.
- Be aware of weather issues which may affect falling. For example, be wary of ice or snow on the entry or exit of your home and even on handrails outside.
- Make sure you get your flu jab, free for all those over 65, pregnant women and people with certain health conditions. The flu jab is available from your GP and most local pharmacies.
- Ensure your cupboards are stocked with long-life and healthy foods and that you eat and drink enough to keep your energy up.

This information has been adapted from:



Local Service Provision

Action on Hearing Loss

Action on hearing loss support people with hearing loss or those that have tinnitus.



Services include; practical advice around protecting hearing, hearing checks, communication services, training and day to day support for people who are deaf and have additional needs.

**Contact: 0808 808 0123 (freephone) / Text Phone: 0808 808 9000 (freephone). Email: wales@hearingloss.org.uk
Website: www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk**

Age Cymru Swansea Bay

Age Cymru Swansea Bay offer a range of services to people aged 50+. The services provided are to enable people to be as independent as possible.



**Contact: 01792 648866 / Email: enquiries@agecymruswanseabay.org.uk
Website: www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/swanseabay**

Alzheimer's Society

Alzheimer's Society works to improve the quality of life for people affected with dementia.



There are a range of support services throughout Swansea, including, dementia support, feel good cafes, support groups etc.

**Contact: 01792 531208 / Email: swansea@alzheimers.org.uk
Website: www.alzheimers.org.uk**

Local Service Provision

British Red Cross



The British Red Cross have a range of services that provide support to individuals and promote independence.

The British Red Cross also provide short term loans of mobility aids to people in need: Contact 01554 749374

Short term practical and emotional support at home to help people regain independence: Contact 01792 772146

Website: www.redcross.org.uk

Parkinson's UK

Parkinson's Swansea Branch offers support and information to people affected by Parkinson's, their families and carers.



Contact: 01792 469259

Email: bvso.southwales@parkinsons.org.uk

RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind People)



yn cefnogi pobl ddall ac
â golwg rhannol

supporting blind and
partially sighted people

RNIB in Swansea has a 'Find Your Feet' Course which focuses on falls prevention. The finding your feet service has seven workshops which support people with sight loss to help maintain their independence and wellbeing. The workshops run weekly within Swansea.

Contact: 01792 776360 / Email: info@cibi.co.uk

Website: www.rnib.co.uk/wales-cymru

Local Service Provision

Swansea Care and Repair

Support is available to older homeowners and private tenants to repair, adapt and maintain homes.

Care and Repair will visit homes and do a home assessment which may enable them to check for home hazards as well as discuss what repairs or adaptations you may need, the possible solutions, the likely costs and sources of funding.

**Contact: 01792 798599 / Email: enquiries@swansecareandrepair.co.uk
Website: www.careandrepair.org.uk**



Swansea Carers Centre

Swansea Carers Centre is a specialist voluntary organisation providing support to carers and former carers across the City & County of Swansea.

The carers centre supports people who care for those with an illness or disability including learning disability, mental health problems, physical disability, dementia and other long term limiting illnesses.

Swansea Carers Centre aims to give much needed support and information to carers across Swansea by providing welfare benefit advice, access to grants and special funds, a counseling service, advocacy services, respite care, volunteering opportunities, carers' mutual support groups, training, consultation opportunities and social events.

**Contact: 01792 653344 / Email: admin@swansecarerscentre.org.uk
Website: www.swansecarerscentre.org.uk**



Local Service Provision

The information included in local service provision is a list of useful organisations for your reference. The list is not exhaustive – for further information please speak with Swansea Council for Voluntary Service or access the Swansea City Healthy Directory. Contact details below.

Swansea Council for Voluntary Service (SCVS)

SCVS is the umbrella organisation for voluntary activity throughout the City and County of Swansea, supporting, developing and representing voluntary organisations, volunteers and communities.



Contact: 01792 544000 / Email: scvs@scvs.org.uk
Website: www.scvs.org.uk

Healthy City Directory

Swansea City Healthy Directory offers a comprehensive list in Swansea of groups, clubs and organisations who can offer support, teaching and encouragement for you to feel healthy and well.



Contact: 0845 4647
Website: www.healthycitydirectory.co.uk

Local Service Provision

NERS (National Exercise referral Scheme Swansea)

The National Exercise Referral Scheme (NERS) is a Welsh Assembly Government funded scheme which has been developed to standardise exercise referral opportunities across all Local Authorities and Local Health Boards in Wales. The Scheme targets clients who have a chronic disease or are at risk of developing chronic disease.

There are a number of different programmes Health Professionals can refer patients with a variety of medical conditions to a supervised programme of activity at a local venue, these are: ***generic exercise referral, falls prevention, cardiac rehabilitation, exercise after stroke, cancer rehabilitation, weight management, pulmonary rehab.***

The Falls prevention course can last up to 48 weeks depending on the participant and aims to assist individuals through an evidenced based programme of activities.

Specific exercises classes are proven to help reduce the risk of falls while working on core areas, these are dedicated to:

- **Postural Stability**
- **Muscle Strength**
- **Balance and Mobility**
- **Coordination**
- **Confidence**

All sessions are delivered at low cost: please check the website or contact NERS for more details:

Contact: 01792 635219

Website: www.physicalactivityandnutritionwales.org.uk



Local Service Provision

Intake Team - Adult Services

The Intake Team deals with all initial enquiries and referrals relating to older people and people with a physical disability.

Contact: 01792 636519 / Text: 07796 275412

Email: intake@swansea.gov.uk

Website: www.swansea.gov.uk



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Local Service Provision

Swansea Mobility Hire

Swansea Mobility Hire, formerly Shopmobility, provides powered scooters, wheelchairs and manual wheelchairs to help people who have limited mobility – through permanent or temporary disablement, illness, accident or age – to shop or visit other facilities within Swansea City Centre.

Scooters available come in various weight limits:

- Up to 16 stone
- 16 – 24 stone
- 24 – 35 stone

Fees and Charges

Membership fees are currently £7.50 per year with a charge of £1 each time the equipment is loaned.

To ensure that suitable equipment is available, please book 24 hours in advance.

**Contact: 01792 461785 / Email: swanseamobilityhire@swansea.gov.uk
Website: www.swanseacitycentre.com/visit/swansea-mobility-hire**



Further General Information

Age UK

Staying Steady, Keep active and reduce your risk of falling
www.ageuk.org.uk/healthandwellbeing

Alzheimer's

Fact sheet
www.alzheimers.org.uk

Parkinson's Fact Sheet

Falls and Parkinson's:
[www.parkinsons.org.uk / resources@parkinsons.org.uk](http://www.parkinsons.org.uk/resources@parkinsons.org.uk)

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)

The organisation publishes a number of leaflets about the prevention of accidents.
[www.rospa.com / help@rospa.co.uk](http://www.rospa.com/help@rospa.co.uk)

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