

General Falls Overview

Why are falls a problem?

Falls are common in people aged 65 and over, with 30-40% falling at least once a year. One in four falls results in an injury and a small portion result in a serious injury e.g. hip fracture. If you have fallen in the last 12 months, you are more likely to fall again. Falls can affect older peoples' quality of life (e.g. avoid activities they once enjoyed as result of concern about falling) and their ability to live independently. Understanding what factors contribute to falls helps to determine the best way to intervene to prevent falls – because we know that falls can be prevented.

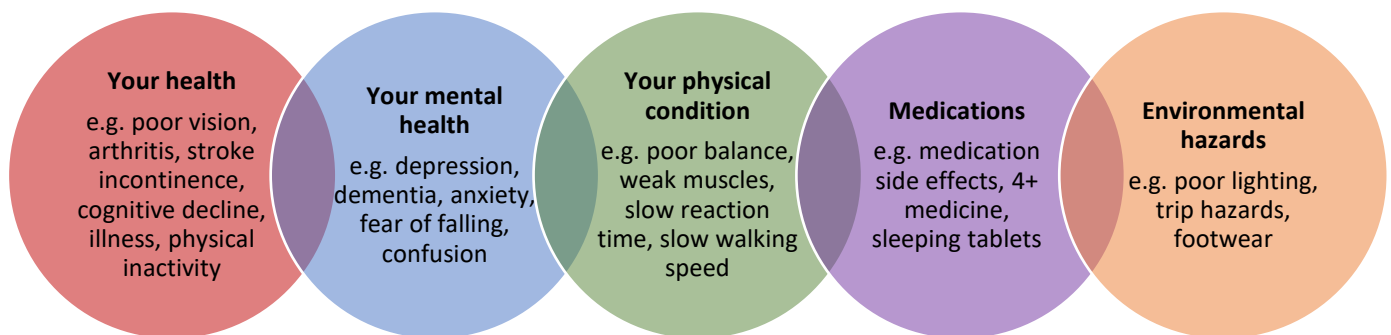


Did you know?

- Falls are the most common reason for premature admission into an aged care facility
- Falls are the leading cause of injury-related hospitalisation and mortality in older people

What causes falls in older people?

People can fall for many reasons, in some cases a number of factors can combine and lead to a fall. The reason or causes of falls are known as risk factors. The more risk factors you have, the more likely you are to fall. Falls can be a sign of poor balance, weak muscles, poor vision, chronic disease and many other factors. Falls can also be a sign of a new medical problem and should be discussed with your doctor. Some **risk factors** for falls are outlined below:



Did you know?

- Most falls occur in and around a person's home doing their daily activities
- Many falls do not involve environmental hazards such as loose rugs or a slippery floor

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Key points to remember:

- As you get older, you are more likely to have weak muscles and instability, which can lead to falls
- Many falls can be prevented
- By identifying and managing your risk factors, you can reduce your risk of falling
- Even if you haven't had a fall, reducing your risk of falling in the future is important
- Exercise is the most effective action you can take to prevent falls
- Improving your balance can help to reduce your concern about falling, increase your balance confidence and prevent falls

What can I do right now?

- Identify your fall risk factors, a health professional can help you do this e.g. GP or physiotherapist
- Incorporate balance exercise that is challenging but safe (e.g. have something sturdy to hang onto if you need) into your exercise regime
- Talk to health care professionals if you have any concerns regarding your fall risk
- Correct vision problems e.g. cataract surgery, consider single lens glasses for outdoor mobility
- Manage any cardiovascular risks e.g. arrhythmias
- Manage foot pain and problems (see podiatrist)
- Try to be more physically active, physical activity and exercise can help many chronic health problems

Tips:

- Talk to your health professional (e.g. GP or physiotherapist) if you are concerned about falls or if you need help identifying fall risk factors
- For more information on falls, fall risk and physical activity visit:
<https://www.activeandhealthy.nsw.gov.au/>
<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/HealthyLiving/falls-prevention-at-home>

Disclaimer: This fact sheet provides general information only. For specific advice about your healthcare needs and how to prevent falls, you should seek advice from your health professional. This information was current at the time of development. It is generalisable for community-dwelling people >60 years. We have presented the best evidence at this point in time.