

Worried about slips, trips and stumbles?



Who we are

Age Scotland is the national charity for older people. We work to improve the lives of everyone over the age of 50 so that they can love later life.

Our vision is a Scotland which is the best place in the world to grow older.

Our mission is to inspire, involve and empower older people in Scotland, and influence others, so that people can make the most of later life.

Our three strategic aims are to:



Help older people to be as well as they can be



Promote a positive view of ageing and later life



Tackle loneliness and isolation

How we can help

We know that growing older doesn't come with a manual. Later life can bring changes and opportunities to your life and you may need to know about rights, organisations and services which are unfamiliar to you.

That's why we provide free information and advice to help you on a range of topics including benefits and entitlements, social care, legal issues such as Power of Attorney, housing and much more. All of our guides are available to download for free from our website, or you can contact our helpline team to have copies posted to you for free.

The Age Scotland **helpline** is a free, confidential phone service for older people, their carers and families in Scotland looking for information and advice.

Later life can bring times when you just need someone to talk to. Our **friendship line** is part of our wider helpline and older people can call us for a chat. We're here to listen, provide friendship and offer support.

For information, advice and friendship



Call us free on: 0800 12 44 222
(Monday – Friday, 9am - 5pm)



Visit [agescotland.org.uk](https://www.agescotland.org.uk)
to find out more.



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Contents

Introduction	p1
Getting help and support	p2
Staying safe at home	p4
Staying safe and active out and about	p6
Exercises for strength and balance	p7
Looking after your feet	p9
Have a plan in case you slip or stumble	p10
Who can help?	p12





Introduction

If you have slipped, tripped, stumbled, or had a close call, you may be worried that you could hurt yourself if this happens again. You could be anxious about whether you can safely go about your normal day. Future falls are often preventable; there is plenty you can do to keep yourself safe, and a lot of support available from health services to keep you on your feet.

The keys to staying as well as you can in later life are all about looking after all of yourself:

- eating well, with the right balance of foods in your diet – see our **Eat Well** guide for advice
- staying hydrated – our **Hydration** guide explains what to do and why this matters
- being physically active – find out more in our guide **Keeping active in later life**
- staying socially connected and using your mind – call the **Age Scotland helpline** on **0800 12 44 222** to find out what's on in your community.





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Getting help and support

All health professionals want you to stay on your feet and be able to get about: they can offer advice and support to help you be safer and more confident at home and outdoors.

If you know why you have slipped or stumbled, there may be practical things you can do to stop it happening again, from fixing down a loose rug to asking someone to help next time you need to change a lightbulb. If you do not know what happened, perhaps because you were dizzy or stood up quickly or were confused, it is a good idea to talk to your GP practice.

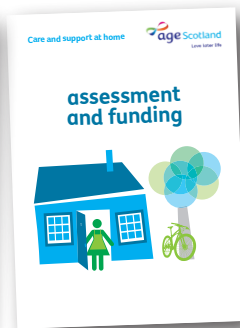
Your **GP practice** can help you by:

- discussing whether one of your medical conditions makes you more likely to stumble, and how this can be managed
- talking you through your realistic risk of falls, and what you can do to stay safe
- checking your prescription medicines to see if any may disturb your balance or concentration, and whether they could be affected by non-prescription medicines or alcohol; your pharmacist can advise you about this too
- making an appointment with a physiotherapist or a community falls exercise programme, who can give you exercises to help with your balance, strength and flexibility
- referring you for checks on your hearing or ears if there are problems with your ears that could affect your balance
- referring you to a specialist falls clinic if you need specialist help.



Other services can also help:

- your **optician** can check your eyes and make sure you have the right glasses to safely do what you need to at home and outdoors
- your council's **social work department** can help if you have mobility problems that could be helped by handrails or ramps at home. Our guides **Care and support at home: assessment and funding** and **Care and support at home: practical help** explain how the system works.





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Staying safe at home

Some people stop doing things they could because they are scared of hurting themselves, but if you stop moving about and doing everyday activities you will lose the skills and strength you used to have. Not being active is called being **sedentary** and it can increase your risk of falling.

Depending on why you slipped or tripped, there are different things you can do to make yourself safer.

You could look at exercises to improve your strength and balance, or check out your home to see if small changes could help you feel more confident to move about and stay on your feet.

Some small risks around the home can be easily fixed to make your day safer. You may not notice the risks around your home as it is your environment and you have developed routines and accumulated possessions – maybe clutter – over many years. It may help to invite a friend over and ask them to look at your home with fresh eyes; you can return the visit and look for any risks in their home too.

Throughout your home, check that you have good lighting, safe lighting at night, and floors that will not cause you to slip or trip. If you have furniture that gets in the way when you need to move about, see if it can be moved, or swapped for something smaller.



For individual rooms check:

- stairs – if you have steps between rooms or a flight of stairs, you need to take extra care and make sure that banisters are secure; you could be distracted if you are carrying something or if your mind is on something else
- kitchen – have the things you use most where you can reach them without leaning, stretching or climbing
- bathroom – think about the best way to reduce slipping on the floor, getting in and out of the bath or shower or in the bath
- living room – if you have clutter, it can trip you, or you may stumble trying to move round it, especially if you need to move quickly
- bedroom – piles of clothes, trailing bedding or a valance can easily wrap themselves around your feet especially if you are tired or when it is dark.

You may find it frustrating that you cannot do some of the things you used to do. Your local **Care and Repair** service can often help if it is harder to do the DIY that you used to be able to manage yourself: they can help with putting up curtain rails, changing lightbulbs and fire alarm batteries and simple repairs.

You can find details of your local service through Care and Repair Scotland: call **0141 221 9879** or see their website **www.careandrepairscotland.co.uk**.



**Worried about slips,
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Staying safe and active out and about

If you have slipped or stumbled, you might be worried about what could happen outdoors. It is really important to get out of your home every day if you can for fresh air, vitamin D from sunlight, exercise and a change of scene. But if it is icy, or you are not feeling too great, it is fine to miss a day and stay safe and cosy at home. If you don't have family nearby who can help, call the **Age Scotland helpline** on **0800 12 44 222** to find out who could provide support locally if you could not get out for a while.

Being outdoors can help you to reduce your risk of slips and trips:

- walking helps improve stamina and if you got off that bus one stop early or used the stairs in the shopping centre this will all help improve your fitness
- climbing hills challenges your body and helps muscle strength and balance
- carrying shopping helps your stamina and can strengthen your muscles and bones.

On days when you can go outdoors there are lots of things you can do, regardless of how fit you are.

You might want to:

- walk by yourself to clear your head
- find a green space or walk near water to treat your senses to outdoor sights, sounds and smells
- stroll to a café with a friend
- try something more organised like a **Paths for All** health walk. Call **01786 641851** or visit **www.pathsforall.org.uk**.

Being active outdoors can reduce your risk of a future fall, by helping your body maintain its fitness and ability to react to a trip or slip.



Exercises for strength and balance

If you struggle to exercise every day, try fitting in exercise over a week. There are six simple exercises that can help with strength and balance. They do not take much time, and you can usually fit them in whilst you are doing something else such as waiting for the kettle to boil, or in advert breaks. Pairing exercises with things you normally do makes it easier to remember them and stick to good habits. The routines below are just suggestions; you can fit the exercises into your day however you like.

For all the exercises, if you are worried that you might fall, make sure you are near a solid surface that could support you. Do not worry if you wobble, wobbling is good for your balance.



Sit to stand in the ads

While TV adverts are on, or in between programmes, go and sit on a hard chair. Sit tall near the front of the chair, feet slightly back and hip-width apart. Lean forwards slightly and stand up powerfully using your legs (use your hands to support you if you need to). Then slowly sit down again. Repeat up to 10 times.



Washing up toe raise

After the dishes are washed stay by the sink. Stand tall with your feet hip-width apart, holding on to the sink edge lightly. Slowly lift your toes (slow count of 3), keeping your knees soft, then slowly lower your toes again (slow count of 5). Try to keep your bottom in and back straight. Repeat 5-10 times.



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At the door heel toe stand

Before you head out of your front door, stand tall with your feet hip-width apart, holding on to the door handle or frame for support if you need to. Place one foot directly in front of the other so that your feet form a straight line. Balance for 10 seconds. Take your feet back to hip-width apart then put the other foot in front and balance for another 10 seconds.



One leg tooth brushing

Stand close to the sink as you brush your teeth. Balance on one leg, keeping your knees soft, and stand tall, only hold on to the sink if you need to. Hold the position for 10 seconds. Now do it on the other leg.



Waiting for dinner heel raise

While dinner is cooking, stand tall with your feet hip-width apart. Slowly lift your heels (slow count of 3), keeping your weight over your big toes and avoiding locking your knees. Lower your heels (slow count of 5). Repeat up to 10 times.



Kettle boiling heel toe walk

They say the watched kettle never boils, but it might seem quicker if you exercise while you wait. Stand tall. Place one foot directly in front of the other so your feet form a straight line and walk up to 10 steps forwards alongside your kitchen table or surface. Look ahead and aim for a steady walking action. Take your feet back to hip-width apart, then repeat the steps in the other direction.



Looking after your feet

Your feet help you get around, get out and about, dance, and flex to stand on tiptoe so you can reach up high. At their best they are flexible, sense whether you have a good grip on a slippery surface, and can feel the warm sand between your toes on a summer beach. Later in life, it is really important to take good care of your feet, **you should:**

- check your feet every day - get to know them well
- wear comfortable, supportive shoes that have a secure fastening
- wear well-fitting socks or tights made from natural fibres
- wash your feet every day, then dry them carefully, particularly between the toes
- apply moisturising cream daily, on the back of your heels but not between your toes, maybe before you go to bed
- keep your toenails in good shape weekly by filing them with an emery board or using nail clippers; cut them straight across, not too short and not down at the corners.

But avoid:

- wearing the same shoes every day
- wearing the same socks or tights for more than a day
- wearing slippers all day
- walking around in bare feet or just socks.

You should take extra care if your feet are numb, sore or tingly, especially if you have a condition like arthritis or diabetes. Your GP practice, pharmacist or NHS Podiatry (foot care) service can give you advice. If you are happy to look for information online you can check out foot care information on the **NHS Inform** website **www.nhsinform.scot** or call them on **0800 22 44 88**.

The **Royal College of Podiatrists** website has footcare advice too: **<https://rcpod.org.uk/common-foot-problems>**.



**Worried about slips,
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Have a plan in case you slip or stumble

If despite your best efforts you slip or trip, it is a good idea to have a plan for how to get up again.

The plans below will work for most people, but if you have problems with your knees or grip, you might need to adapt them to suit you. If it would help, think about how this would work in different rooms and practice when you are with someone to make sure your plan will work if you ever need it.

If you can go online, there are some videos showing how you can get up from the floor, indoors or outdoors on the **NHS Inform** website www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/preventing-falls/dealing-with-a-fall/what-to-do-if-you-fall.

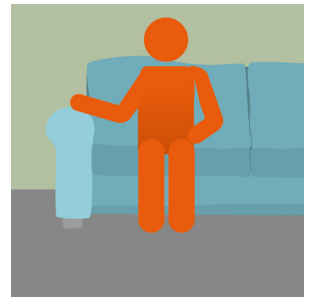
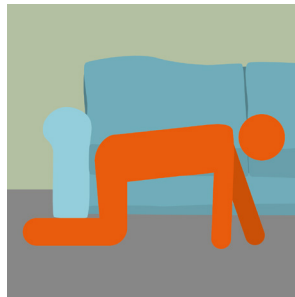
If you can get up:

- roll on to your side
- push on to your hands
- push up on to your hands and knees
- crawl to something solid like the sofa, side of the bath, or even an upturned waste paper bin to lean on if you need to
- place your strongest leg forward
- stand up
- turn slowly
- sit down
- rest and tell someone you have fallen.



If you cannot get up, rest and wait:

- if you can, call for help; dial **999** if you can reach your phone, use your alarm if you have one, or shout for a neighbour to help you
- breathe slowly, in through the nose for a count of 4 and out through the mouth for a count of 6, for a few minutes. This can help you clear your mind at any time
- keep warm - try to reach for a duvet or coat to keep yourself warm until help arrives
- if you are on a cold surface, move onto a carpet or rug if you can
- move gently if you can so you keep warm and don't become stiff or sore; try to rock gently from side to side but keep any injured areas still.





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Who can help?

Age Scotland helpline: 0800 12 44 222

The Age Scotland helpline provides information, friendship and advice to older people, their relatives and carers.

If you need an interpreter call 0800 12 44 222 and simply state the language you need e.g. Polish or Urdu. Stay on the line for a few minutes and the Age Scotland helpline will do the rest.

Call us on **0800 12 44 222** for copies of our publications or download / order them from our website: **www.agescotland.org.uk**.

NHS Inform

Information and advice if you are well but have a question about your health or local NHS services.

0800 22 44 88 / www.nhsinform.scot

Care and Repair Scotland

Provides help to older people and those with disabilities to repair, improve or adapt their home. They provide practical assistance with grant applications, finding reputable tradespeople and co-ordinating work. Some also provide handyperson services and help with small adaptations.

0141 221 9879 / www.careandrepairsotland.co.uk

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Please note that the inclusion of named agencies, websites, companies, products, services or publications in this information guide does not constitute a recommendation or endorsement by Age Scotland or any of its subsidiary companies or charities.

How you can help

Our vision is a Scotland which is the best place in the world to grow older.

All the information and advice we provide is free and completely impartial and in helping people access their rights and entitlements, it can be life changing.

We are an ageing population and more people than ever are coming to us for support. You can help us be there for those that need us most.



Make a donation

No matter how small or large, donations make a massive difference and help us continue our important work.

- ▶ Call **03330 15 14 60**
- ▶ Visit **age.scot/donate**
- ▶ Text **LATERLIFE** to **70085** to donate £5.*



Fundraise

Whether it is having a bake sale, running a marathon or knitting small hats for the Big Knit, there are so many ways to raise vital funds to support our work. To find out more, call **0333 323 2400** or visit **age.scot/fundraise**.



Leave us a gift in your Will

By choosing to leave us a gift in your Will, you can help Age Scotland to continue being there for vulnerable older people in the years to come. To find out more, call **0333 323 2400** or visit **age.scot/legacy**.

* Texts cost £5 plus one standard rate message

Let's keep in touch



Sign up to our newsletter

Our regular newsletters by email contain details of our campaigns, services and how you can support our work.

Sign up today by visiting **age.scot/roundup**



Follow us on social media

Our social media channels are a great way to keep up to date with our work and issues that affect older people.



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[/AgeScotland](https://www.linkedin.com/company/AgeScotland)

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Follow us on social media:



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@age_scotland



/AgeScotland



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