

## Assistance devices to help maintain balance and independence

- walking stick or frame
- indoor trolley
- grab rails in bathroom (in shower, bath and around toilet)
- shower or bath seat
- non-slip mats
- helping hand

For further information or advice, or if you are worried about the risk of falling and would like an assessment by a falls specialist, please contact the falls office by:

Phone: 01865 903400

Email: [oxon.falls@nhs.net](mailto:oxon.falls@nhs.net)

Fax: 01865 262320

## What to do if you fall

**Stop, think, plan and attract help.** Use your care alarm pendant (this only works if worn) or crawl to a telephone or bang on the floor or shout. Try to get up if you can.

**Keep warm.** Cover yourself with anything to hand, for example a towel, rug, or blanket.

**Keep moving.** Move the parts of your body

## Concerns and complaints

We aim to provide you with a high quality service at all times. However, if you have any concerns, complaints or comments about your experience of our service then please tell a member of the team or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service on freephone 0800 328 7971.

Please contact us if you would like the information in another language or different format.

**Arabic** يُرجى الاتصال بنا إذا كنتم ترغبون في الحصول على المعلومات بلغة أخرى أو بتنسيق مختلف.  
**Bengali** আপনি এই ভাষা অন্য ভাষায় বা আলাদা আকারে পেতে চাইলে অনুগ্রহ করে আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করুন।  
**Urdu** اگر آپ یہ معلومات دیگر زبان یا مختلف فارمیٹ میں چاہتے ہیں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔  
**Chinese** 若要以其他語言或格式提供這些資訊，請與我們聯繫  
**Polish** Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku lub w innym formacie, skontaktuj się z nami.  
**Portuguese** Queira contactar-nos se pretender as informações noutra idioma ou num formato diferente.

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Falls prevention

## Maintaining balance

A guide to understanding and managing poor balance

## Balance

Balance and stability are maintained by various parts of the body working together: vision, vestibular (inner ear) and somatosensory (sensation from the skin, muscle, tendons and joints) in addition to muscle strength.

When any of these systems are not functioning well you may experience episodes of spinning, light headedness, trouble focusing with your eyes and poor balance.

As we age our ability to maintain our balance tends to diminish. We can experience the following:

- vision and hearing deteriorates
- joints can become painful and stiff
- muscles weaken
- multifocal glasses can affect balance

## Certain conditions may contribute to poor balance

- prolonged bed rest
- diabetes
- certain neurological disorders (i.e. Parkinson's disease and stroke)
- autonomic neuropathy (vitamin B12 deficiency, diabetes, alcoholism)
- osteo and rheumatoid arthritis
- fractures (hip, vertebrae)
- joint replacements (hip, knee)

## Managing your poor balance

- Avoid sudden or quick movements.
- Plan before you move.
- Get out of bed slowly and in stages. First sit up, and then sit on the side of the bed before standing. Count to 10 before setting off.
- Take your time when changing position (i.e. when rising from your chair or turning).

- Make sure you have your walking aid to hand or something to hold on to when standing up.
- Try to avoid bending down or stretching up quickly.
- If possible, sit when washing, showering, dressing or when working in the kitchen, otherwise lean against the counter or basin.
- Avoid taking risks around the house, for example by standing on a chair to change a light bulb or reaching up to a high cupboard.
- Exercise can improve your balance. Try walking, preferably outdoors or try joining an exercise class.
- Consult your GP before undertaking any form or new physical activity or exercise.