



STANDING ON SOLID GROUND

Simple ways to stay on your feet and prevent falls

*MECC is a joint initiative of Meals on Wheels SA,
Aged and Community Services and SA Health.*



Anyone, of any age, can have a fall, however, it is generally older people who are more likely to fall due to an aging body, pre-existing health conditions and/or poor vision.

Thankfully, most falls don't result in serious injury; however, there is always a risk that a fall could lead to broken or sprained bones, a head injury or worse.

The good news is that there are simple steps we can all take to reduce our risk of having a fall and making these changes can also help to overcome any fear of falling in the future.

DID YOU KNOW...

In South Australia, 38 older people are admitted to hospital every day with injuries due to a fall.



ASSESS YOUR RISK



Falls don't have to be an inevitable part of aging and the first step is to assess your personal risk of a fall.

Understanding your own health will help you to understand your risk of a fall. People with the following health complaints are at a higher risk of a fall:

- Balance problems
- Muscle weakness
- Poor vision
- A long-term health condition like heart disease, dementia or low blood pressure

As well as your health, your home environment can also play a part. A fall is more likely to happen when:

- The floor is wet, such as in the bathroom
- The lighting in the room is dim
- Mats or carpets aren't secured properly

And finally, some activities are riskier than others, such as:

- Going down stairs
- Reaching for something
- Rushing
- Doing home maintenance

Small changes can avoid big falls

Here are some simple steps you can take to prevent a fall.

- 1.** Use non-slip mats, particularly in the bathroom and don't walk on hard floors in socks
- 2.** Mop up spills to prevent wet, slippery floors
- 3.** Organise your home so that climbing, stretching and bending are at a minimum and ask for help with items that are heavy and/or difficult to lift or reach
- 4.** Remove anything you could trip on, eg. clutter, frayed carpet, trailing wires and electrical cords
- 5.** Ensure areas are well lit and give your eyes time to adjust when you move from bright sunlight to indoors



6. Have your eyes checked every year by an optometrist and wear any glasses prescribed for the activity you're doing
7. Wear well-fitting shoes that are in good condition and take care of your feet, including trimming toenails and visiting your GP or podiatrist with any problems
8. If you have a walking aid, use it
9. Take care with or avoid steps, stairs and ladders and don't stand on furniture to reach something
10. Keep footpaths around your home clear and fix any uneven pavers
11. If you require one, wear your hearing aid so you can hear oncoming traffic and people
12. Install a grab rail if required



You can have your eyes checked every year with an optometrist and this test is usually free through Medicare. GlassesSA is a scheme that helps South Australians obtain low cost glasses for people on a full age pension or a full disability pension.

Find out more at sa.gov.au/topics/care-and-support/financial-support/concessions/GlassesSA or call 1300 762 577

Discuss any falls or near misses with your GP.

Your doctor can carry out a simple test to check your balance, vision and review your medications in order to reduce your risk of falling.



STAY ACTIVE

Staying physically active is the most important thing you can do to reduce your risk of having a fall. As we age we lose muscle strength and our sense of balance. The more active we are the stronger our muscles remain and the less chance of having a fall.

Start putting steps in place

Walking is one of the best forms of exercise and it's free. Most neighbourhoods have enjoyable, safe places to walk, and it's a good way to meet the locals. Shopping centres are a great place to walk, cool in Summer and warm in Winter.

Join a group

Fitness groups such as walking groups, aqua aerobics or dancing can be a great way to stay active and meet new people.

Heart Foundation Walking is Australia's largest free walking network. There are community walking groups led by volunteer walk organisers or a community of walkers who track their physical activity online.

To find out where your nearest group is or to start your own visit walking.heartfoundation.org.au or call **1300 362 787**.



Strength and balance

Doing regular exercises to improve your strength and balance can reduce your risk of a fall. These exercises can include activities like walking and dancing, or a specialist training program. Strength For Life is an SA Health funded program aimed at improving balance and mobility in people over fifty. Find out more about Strength For Life at cotasa.org.au/programs/life or call **08 8232 0422**.

Try Tai Chi

There is evidence that taking part in regular Tai Chi sessions can reduce the risk of falls. Tai Chi focuses on your balance, co-ordination and movement and, unlike other martial arts, it doesn't involve physical contact or rapid physical movements.

Find activities in your local area

Take a look at your council website, or chat to your family, neighbours and friends to find out about activities in your local area.

TOP TIP

Always check with your GP before starting a new, additional form of exercise.

If you find activity hard, try smaller 5-10 minute activities spread throughout the day.





It is important to be prepared and have a plan in place.



Below are some tips to help you be prepared:

1. Have a phone within reach on a low table or have a cordless or mobile phone with you, in case it is difficult to get up
2. Know who to call for help. Have a list of numbers near the phone or programmed into the phone
3. Consider a medical alert system that raises an alarm in an emergency
4. Make daily contact with a friend, neighbour, carer or family member and let a trusted friend or family member know how to get into your house if you can't get to the door due to a fall.
5. If you don't have anyone nearby who can call on you, register for the free **Telecross REDI service** on **1800 188 071**. A trained Red Cross volunteer will then call you up to three times a day to make sure you are well. Find out more at redcross.org.au/telecross.



Be Prepared

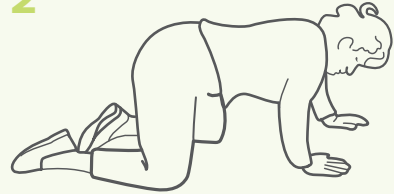
Knowing what to do if you have a fall can help you to feel more confident.

1



Roll onto your side.

2



Get onto your hands and knees and crawl or slide to a sturdy piece of furniture e.g. chair, stairs or rail.

3



From a kneeling position, put arms up onto furniture.

4



Bring one knee forward, putting that foot on the floor.

5



Push up with your arms and legs, pivot your bottom around.

6



Sit down. Rest before trying to move.

If you have a fall:

- Remain calm
- Check if you have any injuries
- Look for any hazards around you before moving or getting help
- Decide if you can get yourself up safely
- If you can't get up, drag yourself to a suitable, comfortable area and if possible, call someone for help.



Notes:

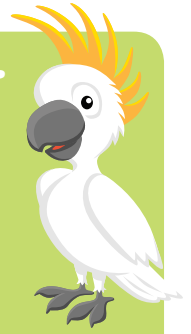
TOP TIP

1. Check your home for fall hazards
2. Stay active to improve strength and balance
3. Be prepared; have a plan



MECC: MAKING EVERY CONTACT COUNT

MECC is about embracing opportunities to talk to people about their health and wellbeing using the skills of asking and listening. MECC recognises the importance of good health and wants to support you to live independently.



Making Every Contact Count (MECC)
SA is a joint initiative of Meals on Wheels SA Inc,
Aged and Community Services SA & NT and SA Health.

MECC SA is based on the UK model, find out more at
makingeverycontactcount.co.uk.

