



Preventing Falls

Avoiding slips, trips and falls

My guide and action plan



**London Borough
of Hounslow**

www.hounslow.gov.uk/falls-prevention

Contents

Introduction	3
Section one: What is my risk?	4
How at risk am I?	4
- Muscle weakness	4
- Poor balance	5
- Visual impairment	6
- Hearing	7
- Diet	7
- Environmental hazards	8
- Medication	10
- Medical conditions	11
What is my risk of falling?	12
Section two: My action plan	13
What actions can you take to reduce your risk of falling?	13
- Action 1: Improve your muscle strength	13
- Action 2: Improve your balance	14
- Action 3: Check your eyesight	15
- Action 4: Be aware of your medication	16
- Action 5: Carry out an assessment to identify any risks in your home and surroundings	17
- Action 6: Be aware of your medical conditions	20
My three-month check	21
My resources	22

Introduction

Our risk of falling often increases as we get older. A fall can have devastating consequences including broken bones, loss of confidence, reduced mobility and an increasing dependence on the help of others. Most falls occur during everyday activities such as getting in and out of the bath or changing a light bulb, and trips and slips due to loose carpets or wet floors. When we fall, we often do not want to recognise the affect it has on us.

There are actions we can all take to reduce our risk of falling. We can address the risk factors around our homes, have regular eye tests, wear fitted, safe footwear, exercise regularly and keep our homes adequately heated.

This guide is split into two sections:

Section one: What is my risk?

This part will help you identify the risks that could affect you.

Section two: My action plan

This part will help you to find ways to reduce your risk of falling by making small practical changes.

If you have had a fall in the past 12 months, please speak to your GP for clinical advice before completing this toolkit.

Section one: What is my risk?

How at risk am I?

What risk factors contribute to my risk of falling?

Answer **yes** or **no** to each statement in the following sections.

Muscle weakness

As we get older, we often reduce the amount of regular physical activity we do, and it is a natural part of ageing to lose our muscle mass. It is important that through regular exercise we strengthen weak muscles. Good strength in our body is a big contributing factor to good balance and reducing our risk of falling.



	Yes	No
I exercise weekly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel strong	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I don't tire easily	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

▶ Score one point for each **no**.

Score:

Poor balance

There are many factors that can lead to poor balance. These include muscle weakness, problems with our feet and various medical conditions (such as vertigo, ongoing dizziness and low blood pressure).



Poor balance greatly increases our risk of falling and it is important to recognise that if we have poor balance, we should take action to improve it or use equipment (such as walking sticks or handrails) accordingly.

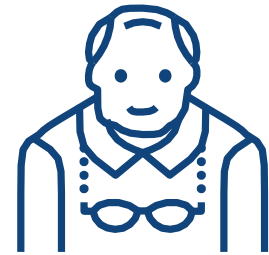
	Yes	No
I lose my balance easily	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I find it difficult to stand still without swaying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I notice that I sometimes stray sideways when walking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel unsteady when I bend down to pick something up or reach into a high cupboard	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I hold on to furniture to walk around the house ▶	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Score one point for each **yes**.

Score:

Visual impairment

Having problems with our eyesight can also increase our risk of falling. If we are having difficulty in seeing trip hazards and edges, the likelihood of having an accident will increase.



By regularly visiting the optician and keeping our eyesight prescription up to date, we can help to minimise the risk. The optician also looks at eye health and can often identify conditions such as cataracts, glaucoma and macular degeneration early. So even if we don't think our vision has changed, it's still important to have an annual eye test (available on NHS).

	Yes	No
I struggle to see borders/edges such as table corners and steps	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My vision is blurry	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I get visual disturbances such as floaters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wear varifocals/bifocals (these can make it difficult to focus on obstacles)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

▶ Score one point for each **yes**.

Score:

Hearing

A hearing deficit means we may not hear people coming up behind us or hear cars approaching which could increase our risk of falling. Sound reverberates off walls and helps us with distance perception and keeping our balance. We may need wax removal or a hearing aid check.



	Yes	No
I find it difficult to hear	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

▶ If you answered **yes**, please score one point.

Score:

Diet

Eating a healthy diet is essential to keeping healthy and building muscle strength. If we have a tendency to skip meals (particularly easy to do if we are living alone), this can increase our risk of feeling dizzy and experiencing a fall. We should remember the importance of different food groups: protein for muscle strength and tissue repair; carbohydrates for energy; fruit and vegetables contain vitamins and minerals plus fibre which helps to keep our bowels healthy.



	Yes	No
I eat a healthy diet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I keep well hydrated	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

▶ Score one point for each **no**.

Score:

Environmental hazards

Hazards in our homes and surroundings can increase our risk of falling. These include loose carpets, slippery floors, slippery baths and showers, a lack of handrails, lots of steps and stairs, regularly using a step ladder or stool to access our everyday essentials, poor/inadequate lighting, walking our dog, cluttered floors, the weather (rain and ice), uneven surfaces (pavements) and many more.



	Yes	No
I have a lot of stairs/steps in my home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have slippery surfaces in my bath or shower	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have some slippery floors in my house	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I regularly use a step stool or ladder	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel anxious when I walk my pet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have loose carpets in my house	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have many trip hazards in my home (such as mats, trailing flexes, low coffee tables, dogs, stools and vacuum cleaners)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I go out in icy, windy and very rainy weather	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

▶ Score one point for each **yes**.

Score:

	Yes	No
I wear adequate footwear for different types of weather	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am aware of trip hazards (such as uneven pavements) on my local walking routes to the shops and/or elsewhere	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My home is well lit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have handrails available in the bath and on the stairs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My house is warm enough	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I look up when I walk meaning I can identify hazards (for instance, overhanging branches or people)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My garden paths are well lit and maintained	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

▶ Score one point for each **no**.

Score:

Medication

Certain medications we take can make us feel lightheaded or dizzy. Some may also reduce our blood pressure or affect our vision – all of which will increase our risk of falling.



	Yes	No
I take four or more medications daily	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I experience side effects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel my medication makes me drowsy and groggy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I regularly feel dizzy and lightheaded (especially when I stand from sitting)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

▶ Score one point for each **yes**.

Score:

If your falls or near-falls are being triggered by feeling faint, dizzy, having 'funny' turns or actually losing consciousness then seek an urgent medical assessment with your GP.

Medical conditions

There are certain medical conditions which can increase our risk of falling as they can cause dizziness, fainting (or feeling faint), low blood pressure, reduced mobility or chronic pain. These conditions include diabetes, vertigo, stroke, heart conditions, arthritis, gout, COPD, incontinence, musculoskeletal problems (affecting our feet, knees or hips), Parkinson's and many more.



	Yes	No
I have one or more of the conditions listed above	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I regularly feel faint	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I often feel dizzy and lightheaded	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have reduced sensation in my feet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I struggle to walk without a walking aid	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have got stiff joints	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am in pain when I walk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel breathless doing short activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I struggle to get to the toilet in time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

► Score one point for each **yes**.

Score:

What is my risk of falling?

Please add up all your points to reach your final score out of 43 points:

Muscle weakness	
Poor balance	
Visual impairment	
Hearing	
Diet	
Environmental hazards	
Medication	
Medical conditions	
My total score	



The higher your score, the higher your risk of having a fall and the more important it is that you take action to reduce that risk.

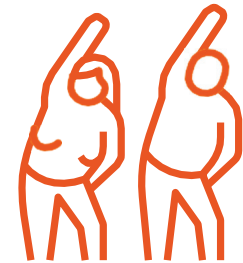
Please see the next section to find out what action you can take.

Section two: My action plan

What actions can you take to reduce your risk of falling?

Action 1: Improve your muscle strength

Exercising regularly can help you to gain muscle strength and balance. Certain exercises really do reduce the risk of falling, however all exercise can help. A good exercise to try is to stand up from sitting in a dining chair with your arms across your body.



There is a real benefit to doing targeted exercise to improve your muscle strength, in addition to usual activities.

It is important to start with exercise and activity you enjoy and find achievable. Also consider whether you prefer to exercise on your own or with other people.

Remember to eat a healthy diet and drink lots of fluids too.

My action is to:

.....
.....

Through this action in three months' time, I would like to feel:

.....
.....

Action 2: Improve your balance.

Difficulties with balance can be very disconcerting and scary. Once you recognise that this is a problem, there are things you can do to address it:



- ✓ Using a walking aid can be very helpful. These range from a walking stick to walkers. Speak to your local pharmacist or a physiotherapist for advice.
- ✓ Check if you need to have more handrails installed around your home. You might need one in the bath or on the stairs, but also in outdoor areas such as by your front or back steps.
- ✓ Make sure that you are wearing good footwear both indoors and outdoors as uneven soles and slip-on shoes or slippers can worsen your balance.
- ✓ Do targeted exercise to improve your balance. Speak to a physiotherapist for advice.
- ✓ Avoid drinking too much alcohol. Reducing your alcohol consumption can reduce your risk of having a fall.
- ✓ Keep your feet healthy. Visit a chiropodist for help or advice.

My action is to:

.....

.....

Through this action in three months' time, I would like to feel:

.....

.....

Action 3: Check your eyesight.

Getting your vision checked regularly means that you will be able to see any trip hazards better:



- ✓ Check with your optician that your prescription is up to date.
- ✓ Ensure that you can read road signs from a distance and books close up.
- ✓ Seek advice from a specialist on how to manage if you have visual disturbances.
- ✓ Make sure your glasses are clean at all times.
- ✓ If you wear varifocals, avoid looking straight down when walking.

My action is to:

.....

.....

Through this action in three months' time, I would like to feel:

.....

.....

Action 4: Be aware of your medication.

Taking prescribed medication regularly can affect you in different ways. If you are experiencing light-headedness, fainting or other symptoms you need to:



- ✓ Speak to your pharmacist or GP about a medication review.
- ✓ Make an appointment with the doctor to discuss any side effects you are experiencing.
- ✓ Continue to take prescribed medication. Do not stop taking the tablets a doctor has prescribed for you.

My action is to:

.....
.....

Through this action in three months' time, I would like to feel:

.....
.....

Action 5: Carry out an assessment to identify any risks in your home and surroundings.

Use this environmental hazard checklist to ensure you are minimising your risk of falling:



Does your home contain a lot of stairs/steps?

- Install handrails near stairs and steps
- Ensure that steps are clearly marked so that you can see them

Do you have slippery surfaces in your bath or shower?

- Install anti-slip grips in your bath or shower
- Install grab rails (avoid suction ones)
- Have an anti-slip bathmat for exiting the bath
- Consider if you need a bath bench
- Request a social care assessment for help

Do you have any slippery floors in your home?

- Make sure floors are always dry
- Mop up spills straight away
- Wear non-slip slippers in your home
- Consider if you could benefit from Telecare in case of an accident. Contact the Health and Social Care Direct team for details

Do you regularly use a step stool or ladder?

- Place all essential items where you can reach them without needing a step
- Ask for help if you need jobs done, such as changing light bulbs, cleaning gutters or cutting hedges
- Ensure that all step stools and ladders are in good condition

Is your home well lit?

- Check that all areas of your home are well lit
- Install brighter lightbulbs where needed
- Fit a night light if you need to get up during the night

Do you have a pet?

- Make sure that you are aware of your pets and their toys in your home as they can cause trip hazards
- When walking your dog consider the risk of them bolting whilst on a lead and causing a fall
- Make sure you can bend down safely to reach your pet's food bowl

Do you have any loose carpets?

- Remove or replace any loose mats or carpets
- Tape down mats that are essential so they can't move or curl up at the edges

Are there many trip hazards in your home (such as trailing wires, stools and vacuum cleaners)?

- Ensure that any trip hazards around your home are tidied away
- Keep walkways clear. For instance, put your coffee table to the side of your armchair rather than directly in front of it

Do you have adequate footwear?

- Check that the soles of your shoes are in good condition
- Make sure shoes stay on your feet
- Avoid slip on shoes and mules
- Check that your footwear is comfortable and easy to walk in

Be aware of the weather (such as ice and rain)

Try to avoid walking in inclement weather

Put salt down on icy paths

Consider using a walking aid, if needed

Ensure the house is warm enough so that your muscles and joints don't get stiff with cold

Are you aware of any trip hazards on your local walking routes?

Identify trip hazards on any regular routes and aim to avoid them

Report hazards to the council

Avoid looking directly down. Instead look forwards and down to widen your field of vision to better spot hazards all around you.

My action is to:

.....
.....

Through this action in three months' time, I would like to feel:

.....
.....

Action 6: Be aware of your medical conditions.

Some medical conditions might increase your risk of falling.



Speak to your doctor or pharmacist about any ongoing medical problems that could increase your risk of falling.

- ✓ If you feel dizzy or faint, sit down until the feeling has passed.
- ✓ Make sure you speak to the doctor about any chronic pain and how best to manage it.
- ✓ Take care of your feet. Visit the chiropodist and podiatrist if needed.
- ✓ If you get tired, stop and rest until you're sufficiently recovered.
- ✓ If you get breathless, stop and rest until the feeling has passed.
- ✓ Break tasks down. Try doing little and often to get things done, rather than doing too much at once.
- ✓ If you worry about needing the toilet, try and have a plan in place to manage this so you are not rushing. Identify where there are toilets available.

My action is to:

.....

.....

Through this action in three months' time, I would like to feel:

.....

.....

My three-month check

	Yes	No
I have taken action to reduce my risk of falling I	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
have completed the actions I set myself	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel stronger within myself	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have reduced hazards and risks in my home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have sought advice – where needed – about my health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel less anxious about falling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

After completing this toolkit, if you find that you are at a medium to high risk of falling, or if any of the topics have made you feel anxious or worried, please speak to your GP or local pharmacist for further advice.

My resources

Exercise ideas:

Healthy Hounslow

 www.healthyhounslow.co.uk

Hounslow Age UK

 <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/hounslow/activities-and-events/activities/>

Falls prevention

 www.hounslow.gov.uk/fall-prevention

Swimming or gym sessions

 <https://lamptonleisure.co.uk>

Dancing

 <https://www.moveintowellbeing.org.uk>

Exercise at home

Enjoy gardening, going on a walk, doing stretches or exercises.

For vision:

Contact your optician.

RNIB

 0303 123 9999

Partially Sighted Society

 01302 965195

For equipment and home adaptations (including Telecare):

Linkline

 0300 013 4735

Hounslow Falls & Bone Health Service (HRCH)

The service offers multi-disciplinary specialist assessment and treatment in falls prevention and bone health management. The aim of our service is to work preventatively to increase a person's ability to maintain their health and reduce the risk of falls.

Referrals are accepted using the Hounslow SPA referral form via Hounslow and Richmond SPA from your GP or healthcare professional and voluntary services. Self-referrals will be accepted directly into the service via the team administrators on 020 8614 5490.

Email: hounslowandrichmond.spa@nhs.net

Home Safety Team (LBH)

Offer home assessments to any residents who are concerned about falling or have fallen. We identify risks and hazards which may cause a slip, trip, or fall. The assessment is carried out using a multifactorial assessment tool which allows the Home Safety Team to identify factors relating to the resident and the environment they live in, which can often be the cause of falling.

If you would like an assessment, email home.safety@hounslow.gov.uk or call 07976 948 204.

For further advice and guidance:

Hounslow Age UK

Physical Activities are provided by experienced, qualified tutors and include yoga, pilates, zumba and line dancing. Staff, volunteers, and other tutors provide a range of social activities such as Bingo, art & craft, board games and quizzes.

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/hounslow/activities-and-events/activities/>



 <https://www.hounslow.gov.uk>

With thanks to The London Borough of Hillingdon
Home Safety Team, Public Health, Hounslow Borough Council
October 2023