

## Patient Information : Falls Prevention



Cork Emergency Medicine

[EMed.ie](http://EMed.ie)



You have presented to the Emergency Department following a fall. We would like to help you understand more about falls, how they are caused and the way falls can be prevented. A fall can cause loss of confidence and independence and may increase the risk of another fall. However falling is not an inevitable part of ageing and there are things you can do to reduce your risk of falling and increase the control you have over your life.

### The causes of falls

Falls are a common cause of injury for the population as a whole, however the chance of falling increases with age especially for people over the age of 80 years. The majority of falls for older people occur in and around the home.

### Falls can be caused by:

- Certain health conditions
- Changes in eyesight or eye disorders
- Poor balance or walking patterns
- Low levels of physical activity
- Certain medications
- Hazards in the home or community

Falls may be caused by one or more of these things. By looking closely at your health, lifestyle and environment you can prevent further falls and remain active and independent.

### Preventing falls

If you are concerned, please contact the Emergency Department you first attended:

Mercy University  
Hospital  
(021) 4271971

M-UCC at  
SMHC (St.  
Mary's Health  
Campus)  
(021) 4926900

CUH  
(021) 4920200

Mallow LIU  
(022) 58506

Bantry General  
Hospital  
(027) 52900





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### Talk with your GP

Many health conditions contribute to falls. Your general practitioner or specialist is the best person to consult regarding your ongoing medical conditions. You can ask your doctor what can you do to reduce the risk of your condition causing a fall.

### Check your medications

Some medications can also make people unsteady on their feet. Each person responds slightly differently to medications so it is important to understand the effects of certain medications. Your doctor should regularly review your medications and you should tell your doctor about any symptoms such as dizziness that you experience when taking medications.

### Check your vision

Physical changes take place in the eyes that are more common as we get older. Many changes are gradual and they may not be noticed, but they all increase the risk of a fall. To pick up gradual changes, ask your doctor to check your eyesight every year. If you need glasses consult your optometrist as to the type of glasses you should purchase. Some people are at extra risk when wearing bifocals or trifocals.

### Be active

Being physically active improves health and the functioning of all the body's systems, such as breathing, circulation, digestion, and





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sleeping. Physical activity is also one way to reduce the risk of falling. It can:

- Improve walking patterns and balance
- Strengthen muscles and joint range
- Improve stamina
- Speed up reaction time

Talk to your GP before commencing exercise. If you have problems walking, standing or balancing you may need to see a physiotherapist who can develop a physical activity program to suit you. There are also a number of community-based exercise programs that can improve your walking, strength and balance. Tai Chi is particularly effective and can be a great way to slowly increase your activity.

### See a podiatrist

You may also need to see a podiatrist who can prevent and treat foot problems and advise you regarding safe footwear. A safe shoe, which has a good fit, flat broad heels, good fastening and good grip on the sole, will reduce your risk of falling.

### Create a safe environment

Most people fall in or around their home. However it is not difficult to create a safe home environment. By ensuring your home is safe you will enhance the likelihood of remaining independent and at home for as long as possible.





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Your home can be made safer by:

- Slip resistant flooring and paving surfaces
- Extra lighting in and around the house
- Clear, uncluttered hallways
- Uncluttered bedrooms without loose rugs
- Hand rails to assist with balance when using steps, stairs, the shower or toilet.

You can also reduce your risk of falling by ensuring all power cords are tucked away.

Automatic sensor night lights and touch lamps next to your bed are also helpful.

An occupational therapist can advise you about changes, aids or equipment which can be provided to make you safer in your home and enhance your lifestyle.

### Further Advice or Assistance

We suggest that you visit your GP when you have returned home from the Emergency Department. Your doctor may suggest a visit to an allied health professional such as an occupational therapist, physiotherapist and / or podiatrist. You will find allied health professionals working at your local community health centre (see white pages) and a referral from your doctor is not necessary. By discussing the circumstances of your fall and investigating the ways to reduce your risk of falling, you will increase your independence and control over your life.

