



# Preventing falls

Information and advice

# Falls are the single biggest cause of accidental injuries in the home. While people of all ages can be affected, falls are more common and tend to result in more serious injuries in older people, with people aged 65 and older at the highest risk of having a fall.

Injuries from a fall can be severe and long lasting. As well as causing pain and distress, having a fall can result in a loss of confidence and feelings of anxiety about falling again.

Some people can also lose the ability to take part in normal day to day activities after a fall which can result in a loss of independence.

However, falls are preventable and making small simple changes to our lifestyle or in the home can greatly reduce the risk of having a fall.

## Home Safety

Home safety and being able to recognise slip or trip hazards around the house can make a real difference in reducing the risk of having a fall.

### Always try to remember:

- Don't leaving items on the floor, particularly on stairs or walkways
- Check for damaged or worn carpet on stairs and make sure rugs are placed safely so they can't become a trip hazard
- Keep electric cables and power extensions tidy so they don't trail onto walkways

- Wear good fitting footwear and slippers; loose or badly worn footwear are known to cause falls.
- Make sure there is good lighting especially on landings, stairs and hallways with two-way light switches where possible
- Try to make sure that chairs, toilets and beds are not too high, low or unstable
- Have a lamp next to the bed which is easy to access during the night
- Make sure any banisters or handrails are sturdy and fit additional handrails where required

You can use the [Fall Prevention checklist](#) provided in this leaflet to carry out a simple risk assessment in your own home or in the home of an older friend or relative.

East Ayrshire's Social Work Teams can also help to plan home environments, and provide and install supports and adaptations to minimise the risk of falls to vulnerable people. This includes providing walking aids, installing walk-in washing facilities, fitting ramps, bannisters, handrails, chair lifts etc.



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For further information contact the Health and Social Care Team on: 01563 554200 or 01290 427810

For further information about [household supports and adaptations](#) contact the Health and Social Work Teams.

# Everyone has different levels of physical fitness and as we get older, keeping as active as possible will help to maintain good levels of strength and balance.

## Keeping Active

There are lots of different ways of keeping active and whether you enjoy regular walks or going to the gym, the important thing is to keep moving as much as possible.

The **Vibrant Communities Team** provide activities to suit older people regardless of their level of fitness and mobility, across venues in East Ayrshire.

**Invigor8** is a falls prevention class, aimed at people who may be at risk of falling or have suffered a fall. The class focuses on improving strength and stamina, and doing these exercises regularly will help to improve balance.

If you or someone you know would benefit from these classes, Health Professionals within GP practices and partners such as **Community Connectors** can make referrals through **Activity on Prescription**.

Should you have any issues with the referral scheme, please contact Vibrant Communities by email: [CHAT@east-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:CHAT@east-ayrshire.gov.uk) or call 01563 578124

Chair based exercise classes are also available at the following locations, with weekly sessions provided by trained staff.

For information about class times, call the numbers below or email [CHAT@east-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:CHAT@east-ayrshire.gov.uk)

<b>Afton Court</b> , New Cumnock	Tel: 01290 333816
<b>Ellisland Court</b> , Mauchline	Tel: 01290 550573
<b>Rowentree Court</b> , Drongan	Tel: 01292 590888
<b>Garven Court</b> , Kilmarnock	Tel: 01563 550389
<b>Hamilton Gardens</b> , Stewarton	Tel: 01560 483872
<b>St Maurs Gardens</b> , Kilmaurs	Tel: 01563 572337
<b>Ross Court</b> , Galston	Tel: 01290 550573

In addition to exercise classes, health walks are also available ranging from 30 to 60 minutes long. More information on health walks is available at [www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk](http://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk)

## Eyesight

As we get older our eyesight can deteriorate and it's important to get regular eye tests as reduced vision can also increase the risk of having a fall. Remember eye tests are free and a home eye test can be arranged for anyone who has transport or health issues. Contact your local optician for further information.

## Medication

People who are prescribed four or more medicines are known to be at an increased risk of falls. Stopping taking medication without seeking medical advice first is never recommended however,





if it is possible that medication could be having an effect on your balance and stability, you can arrange for a medication review with your GP or speak to your pharmacist for further information.

## Winter Weather

When our roads and pavements are affected by ice and snow, the risk of falls, particularly for those who are more vulnerable increases.

[Ayrshire Roads Alliance \(ARA\)](#) carry out an extensive winter gritting program on roads and footpaths including the provision of community grit bins in areas of higher risk.

**ARA Winter Resilience Group** can also provide additional support to local community groups and others to help with footpath gritting, including the provision of training, salt materials, footpath spreading equipment and appropriate PPE.

Further information on Winter Resilience Groups and application for support is available at [www.ayrshireroadsalliance.org](http://www.ayrshireroadsalliance.org)

Or contact us by email:  
[enquiries@ayrshireroadsalliance.org](mailto:enquiries@ayrshireroadsalliance.org)  
or phone 01563 503160.

The progress of gritting/ploughing vehicles and the locations of the nearest community Grit Bins can be found at [ara.grittertracker.co.uk](http://ara.grittertracker.co.uk)

## Further Information

Further information and resources on fall prevention and home safety can be found at the RoSPA website:

- [Fall Prevention](#)
- [Home Safety](#)

For any further information contact EAC Health and Safety Helpdesk at:  
[HealthandSafety@east-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:HealthandSafety@east-ayrshire.gov.uk)

## Safety checklist for preventing falls at home

<b>At the front and back door</b>	
Paths, steps and patios are even and well maintained	
Handrail is in place to steps	
Walking route is clear, and kept free of pots and other objects	
Door mats are securely fixed and won't slip	
<b>On the stairs and landing</b>	
Kept free of clutter such as papers, books or clothes the stairs and landing	
Handrails are fitted securely on both sides for the stairs	
Bright lighting for the stairs and landing	
Carpet is in good condition and not heavily patterned	
<b>In the hallway and living room</b>	
Rugs and carpets are in good condition	
Carpets are not heavily patterned	
Rugs are secured in place and won't slip	
Floor is free of clutter such as shoes, books and bags	

Cables and wires for lamps and chargers are kept to the edge of rooms	
Walking routes are clear, and kept free of furniture and other obstacles	
<b>In the bathroom</b>	
Non-slip bath or shower mats are in place	
Grab rails are fitted by the bath, shower and toilet	
<b>In the kitchen</b>	
Slip-resistant flooring – talk to a flooring supplier to find out more	
Everyday items are stored within easy reach	
A sturdy step stool with a handle is available for reaching higher items.	
Wet patches are investigated to fix the cause of leaks	
<b>In the bedroom</b>	
Floor is kept free of clutter, particularly around the bed	
Lamps are close to the bed and in easy reach	
Slippers are in good condition and fit well	

## Health checklist

### Sit less, move more

Exercise is good for our all-round physical and mental health, and practising regular strength and balance exercises can reduce the risk of falls.

Exercising on a daily basis

Have found out about exercises that help to prevent falls

### Plan to get up

Find out how to get up safely after a fall by watching the video at [www.rospa.com](http://www.rospa.com)

Have watched the video and now how to get up safely

### Consider sight

Reduced vision can contribute to a greater likelihood of falls. You may be entitled to free eye tests.

Have had an eye test in the last year and updated my glasses if needed

### Think medicine

Taking four or more medicines increases the risk of falls, so have your medication reviewed regularly. Never stop taking medication without first checking with your doctor.

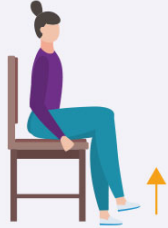
Date of last medication review:

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## Exercises for strength and balance

### 1. Circulation booster



#### To reduce inactive sedentary time:

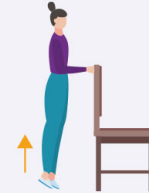
- Sit tall, hip walk the buttocks forwards to just past the centre of the chair
- Lightly hold the sides of the chair if you need to
- Using the ankles and feet, march the legs
- Build to a steady rhythm that feels comfortable
- Continue for one to two minutes
- Add the arm march, one arm at a time, keeping your posture lifted – you will feel the need to take slightly deeper breaths, but should not be breathless. This is the aim of the circulation boost.

### 2. Stand up and sit down for strength



- Place the heels slightly behind knees
- Lift the trunk tall and ease slightly forwards
- Stand up (using hands on the chair for support if needed. Progress to no hands over time)
- Step back until legs touch the chair, then stand tall, bend knees and slowly lower bottom back into the chair
- Build to repeat two to three times, increasing to 10 times over time – and repeat across your day.

### 3. Heel raises for strength

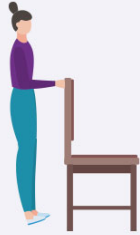


- Stand tall holding a sturdy table, counter or the sink
- Raise heels taking your weight over the big toe and second toe, hold for a second
- Lower heels to the floor with control
- Build to repeat three to five times, increasing to 10 times over time – and repeat across your day.



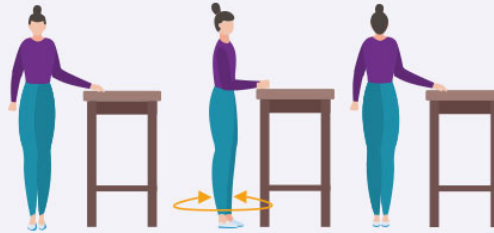


## 4. Toe raises for strength



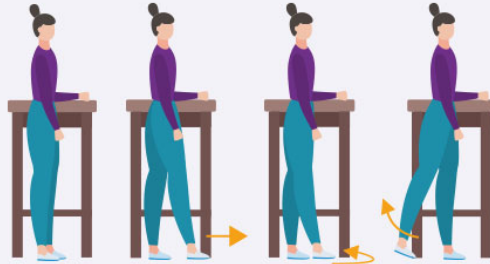
- Stand tall holding a sturdy table, counter or the sink
- Raise toes taking weight back on to heels, without sticking your bottom out
- Hold for a second or two
- Lower toes to the floor with control
- Build to repeat three to five times, increasing to 10 times over time – and repeat across your day.

## 5. Turning with confidence - 180 degrees



- Stand side-on to a firm, fixed, reliable support, with hand on the support
- Feet hip width apart, weight even across both feet
- Feel balanced and confident before you start
- Take a few marches on the spot to feel confident and then start to turn the direction of the march towards your support
- Pick up the foot from the floor, replace and get your balance before you step again
- Keep feet hip width apart, this will provide more support during the turn
- Stop when you are facing the opposite direction to how you began (with your other hand on the support), pause and return back to start position.

## 6. Four positions of balance and extra steps practice



- Stand side-on to a firm, fixed, reliable support, with hand on the support
- Feet hip width apart, weight even across both feet
- Feel balanced and confident before you start
- Bring the feet closer together, try to hold this position – build to 10 seconds over time. Once you are successful with this position, try the next...
- With the leg farthest from the support, take a half step forwards, try to hold this position – build to 10 seconds over time. Once you are successful with this position, try the next...
- With the leg farthest from the support, step the foot in front of the other, as if walking on a tight rope
- Transfer weight across both of the feet, take extra steps at any time if you feel unsteady, build to 10 seconds over time. Once you are successful with this position, try the next...
- With the leg farthest from the support, prepare to stand on one leg. Take half step behind and bending at the knee lift the foot from the floor, replacing it to regain balance when you need.

## 7. Upper back squeezer



### Using a tea towel:

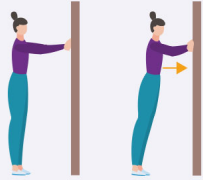
- Sit in upright position
- Fold a tea towel, grip palms up to trunk width
- Keeping the tea towel at belly button height (palms up), lift your chest up to open the posture and pull apart the tea towel to put mild tension through
- Keeping elbows "tucked in", squeeze the tea towel towards your tummy, elbows drawing behind you
- Feel the shoulder blades squeeze together
- Breathe freely as you usually do
- Return to start position, release grip, relax posture for a moment and then repeat.





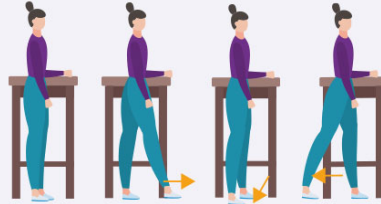


## 8. Wall press/ push up



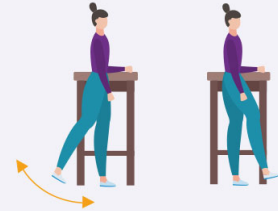
- Stand at arms' length from wall
- Place hands on the wall at chest height, slightly wider than shoulder width, fingers upwards
- Keeping back straight and tummy tight, bend elbows lowering body with control towards the wall
- Press back to the start position
- Build to repeat two to three times, increasing to 10 over time, and repeat across the day when you feel you can.

## 9. Directional stepping



- Stand side-on to a firm, fixed, reliable support, with hand on the support
- Feet hip width apart, weight across both feet
- Feel balanced and confident before you start
- With leg farthest from the support, step the leg forwards, heel strike first, transfer your weight and step on to that leg
- Push back to start position
- With the same leg, step out to the side, ball of foot leading and contacting the floor first, transfer weight across both feet and then push back to start point
- With the same leg, take a small step behind, ball of foot contacting first, transfer the weight across both feet and then push back to start point
- Feel balanced before you step in any direction
- Take extra steps if you need to regain balance at any point.

## 10. Flamingo swing



- Stand side-on to a firm, fixed, reliable support, with hand on the support
- Feet hip width apart, weight even across both feet
- Feel balanced and confident before you start
- Stand tall
- With the leg farthest from the support, bend and raise the knee slightly and with control swing the leg backwards
- Try one or two swings and build to five to six, put your foot down to the floor if you feel unsteady – this is a positive movement to rehearse!
- Turn slowly to repeat on other leg.







East Ayrshire Council  
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir an Ear