

Keeping well and safe at home

Factsheet 16b -29 May 2009 (2 Pages)

This information is to help keep you safe, well and maintain your independence at home by helping you to prevent falls and accidents. Falls and accidents are more common as people get older and many older people experience them each year. Remember that making small changes may help you to avoid a fall and keep safe and independent. Always tell your GP or other health professional if you have a fall – they may be able to help you reduce your risk of having a fall.

You can reduce the risk of falls, accidents and injuries by:

- Taking time to look through this factsheet which offers information to keep you safe and well
- Consider the safety suggestions.

If you need help following any of the suggestions contained in this factsheet ask a friend or relative to help or contact Care Direct on 0845 1551 007.

Your general health

Have you had an eyesight test in the past year? Ask your optician for regular eye tests – at least every two years or if you notice any change in your sight. Eyesight checks are free to the over 60's. Separate glasses can be safer than bifocals or varifocals. Always remember to keep your glasses clean – make cleaning glasses a routine after meals!

Do you feet require attention? Visit a chiropodist or discuss footcare with your GP. You may be entitled to free treatment.

Have you considered having a flu jab? 'Flu can, in the short term, make you more prone to falls and accidents.

Do you get enough exercise? Keep active. Housework and walking both count. To find out about other ways to keep active, contact Care Direct on 0845 1551 007.

Do you have a family history of osteoporosis (brittle bones)? Bones get thinner with age, so include lots of calcium and vitamin D in your diet. Drink milk and eat dairy products, meat, fish, poultry, fruit and vegetables. Daylight is a source of vitamin D, so get out when you can.

Mobility

Have you fallen in the past six months? If the cause was a hazard in the home, has it been removed or repaired? Discuss the fall with your doctor and contact your local Devon Care and Repair service for home safety advice, contact Care Direct on 0845 1551 007 for your local office.

Do you have weak muscles, balance problems or stiff joints or have difficulty getting in or out of a chair or the bath? Physiotherapy or Occupational Therapy may help. You can buy equipment privately or, after assessment, equipment may be supplied by Social Services following assessment. Contact Care Direct on 0845 1551 007.

Do you have difficulty walking? Ensure walking aids are suitable for your needs- a physiotherapist or specialist retail outlet may be able to advise you. Don't use other people's walking aids. Check any equipment you have for signs of wear and tear. Replace ferrules [rubber 'feet'] as soon as they are worn.

Balance and dizziness

Do you get dizzy or light headed? Pause when getting out of bed or up from a chair. Try moving your arms and legs a few times. If symptoms of dizziness are severe or come on suddenly, tell your doctor. Your blood pressure may need checking.

Medicines

Do you take medicines? If you are concerned they may be causing any dizziness or other side effects, discuss with your pharmacist or family doctor. If possible visit the same pharmacy – many pharmacists place your details on computer so when you present a new prescription or buy medicines they will check for side effects and provide advice. If you are 75 or over, your medicines should be reviewed by your doctor every 12 months (or every six months if you are taking four or more medicines). If you have not had a review, ask your GP for one.

Do you have any out-of-date medicines? Medicines should not be used after the expiry date of the prescription or 'use by date'. They should not be given to anyone else. Please return out-of-date medicines to any pharmacy.

Do you remember when to take your tablets? Ask your doctor or nurse about help with remembering to take your tablets. Store medicines in a safe but accessible place.

Alcohol

Remember alcohol can affect your balance. It does not mix well with some medicines. Ask your pharmacist for advice.

Your wellbeing

Do you have trouble sleeping? Do you become confused or forgetful? In some cases there may be a reason that your doctor can advise upon and suggest help or treatment.

Is your home warm enough? It is especially important to keep the living room and bedroom warm, particularly if you have mobility problems. Make sure that you do not turn off the heating to save money. You may be eligible for a home efficiency grant. Contact Care Direct on 0845 1551 007 for advice.

For further information on Falls and accidents see our factsheets: FS16a – Falls are no laughing matter and FS16c – Are you safe at home?

Further factsheets can be found online at www.devon.gov.uk/factsheets
If you have any further questions please contact **Care Direct 0845 1551 007**

A large print version of this factsheet is available on www.devon.gov.uk/largeprint-factsheets but if you would like it in a different format such as Braille or audio, or in a different language, please contact our Customer Service Centre on 0845 155 1015 or email customer@devon.gov.uk.

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