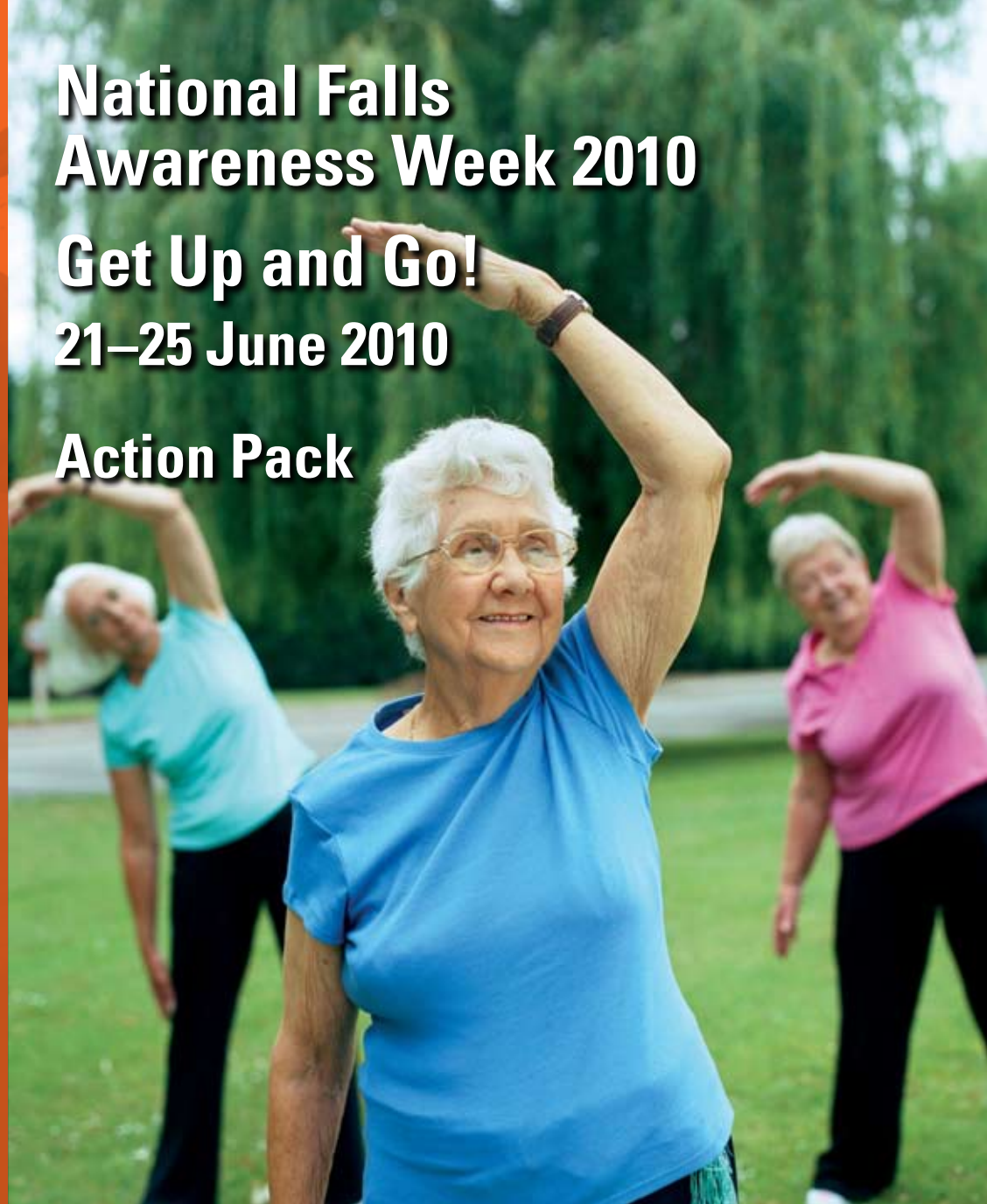




# National Falls Awareness Week 2010

## Get Up and Go! 21–25 June 2010

### Action Pack



Age Concern England (charity number 261794) has merged with Help the Aged (charity number 272786) to form Age UK, a charitable company limited by guarantee and registered in England: registered office address 207–221 Pentonville Road, London, N1 9UZ, company number 6825798, registered charity number 1128267. Age Concern and Help the Aged are brands of Age UK. The three national Age Concerns in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales have also merged with Help the Aged in these nations to form three registered charities: Age Scotland, Age NI, Age Cymru. ID8922 02/10 Printed on FSC-certified paper using wood and mixed products from well managed forests and other controlled sources

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# Welcome to National Falls Awareness Week 2010

We all know what it is to fall. It can happen to a person at any age and at any time. But as we grow older and the risk factors increase, what was once just an embarrassing occurrence becomes much more serious.

The consequences of a fall in later life can be devastating, both physically and emotionally. They can cause loss of function, mobility, independence and confidence. But despite this, falls are not an inevitable part of ageing.

Last year, over 1,000 events took place around the UK, encouraging older people to find out more about falls prevention and take part in local activities. Building on this success, National Falls Awareness Day has been extended to a week-long celebration, which will take place from 21 to 25 June 2010.

We hope you'll be able to join us to raise the profile of projects and activities which help older people reduce their risk of falling and stay active in later life.

**For more information on National Falls Awareness Week 2010 visit [www.helptheaged.org.uk/fallsday](http://www.helptheaged.org.uk/fallsday), email [falls@helptheaged.org.uk](mailto:falls@helptheaged.org.uk) or call 020 8765 7200.**

## What is 'Get Up and Go'?

Get Up and Go is the message of National Falls Awareness Week 2010. It represents the strength and balance we all need to keep active and independent. Put quite simply, Get Up and Go is:

- the strength and power to rise from a chair
- balance to remain upright
- balance and endurance to go walking.



## What do we want?

National Falls Awareness Week is an opportunity to highlight the many benefits of physical activity in later life, especially in regard to falls prevention.

We want to:

- **Promote the fact that it's never too late to get started**

Almost everyone can do something to become more active, improve their physical health and reduce their risk of falls.

- **Raise awareness of the role of strength and balance**

Strength and balance hold the keys to independent living. Without them, we would be unable to do everyday activities like getting up from a chair and going walking. Quite simply, good strength and balance gives us the ability to Get Up and Go!

- **Promote the importance of individually tailored exercise**

Physical activity can help reduce the risk and manage many medical conditions, but in order to be effective in preventing falls, it must be tailored to individual needs and individual ability.

We hope you will be able to join us and hold an event during National Falls Awareness Week to promote these messages and help older people understand how they can get up and go.



## Physical activity

Physical activity is one of the most effective ways of positively influencing our health. Not only can it lower our risk of getting serious conditions, such as stroke, heart disease, depression and certain cancers, but specific programmes for strength and balance have been shown to reduce the risk of falls by as much as 60 per cent.

It's important to remember that not all types of exercise prevent falls. In order to be effective, exercise interventions must include strength and balance components, and should be tailored to individual circumstances and capabilities. For example, tai chi can help reduce the risk among those who have not yet fallen, but it is a less effective measure in helping to manage falls.

The general message on physical activity is nevertheless an important one. Good physical fitness is essential in enabling many older people to get up from the floor following a fall, and can help to reduce the fear of falling.

For further information on evidence based exercise and how to tailor to the individual, see Falls and Fractures: exercise training to prevent falls (Department of Health, 2009). [http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod\\_consum\\_dh/groups/dh\\_digitalassets/@dh/@en/@pg/documents/digitalasset/dh\\_103151.pdf](http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/@pg/documents/digitalasset/dh_103151.pdf)

## Interesting facts

- **It's never too late!**

In fact, those with a sedentary lifestyle are likely to feel the health benefits of physical activity more quickly than those with an active lifestyle.

Research has shown that high-resistance weight training can lead to significant gains in muscle strength, size, and functional mobility, even among frail residents of nursing homes up to 96 years of age – in some cases, this improvement was equivalent to 20 years.

- **We're not doing enough**

Only 17 per cent of men and 13 per cent of women over the age of 65 are achieving the recommended level of physical activity as set out by the Chief Medical Officer. In addition, 45 per cent of adults over the age of 70 years take a 20-minute walk less than once per year or never.

- **Physical activity recommendations**

Older adults should aim to achieve 150 minutes of physical activity a week. This could be in five blocks of 30 minutes, 10 minutes or even shorter periods for those who are less able. Aim to build up to the full amount gradually. Additional components of strength and balance exercise are essential to keep healthy and reduce falls.

- **Muscle strength is vital to perform daily activities**

This includes getting out of the bath or a chair. With inactivity, muscle quickly wastes away; after only two weeks in bed recovering from illness, we can lose 1–2 per cent of bone density and up to 20 per cent of our strength.

Specific programmes for strength and balance have been shown to reduce the risk of falls by as much as 60 per cent.

- **Exercise stimulates the production of growth hormone**

This helps to maintain muscle and bone and is particularly important for those who have, or are at risk of, osteoporosis; bone density can be maintained only by weight-bearing exercise.

**For more facts and research on physical activity in older adults, visit the British Heart Foundation National Centre website: [www.bhfactive.org.uk](http://www.bhfactive.org.uk)**



# Holding an event

There are lots of different ways to draw attention to the issue of falling and highlight the importance of physical activity in later life. You could hold a class or taster session to demonstrate the types of activities available to older people. Alternatively, if this is something your organisation already does, why not organise a competition or a 'Bring a Buddy' day to get new service users involved?

If you are unable to hold an event yourself, you could help signpost to services in your area with a display or offer an advice session.

Here are some more suggestions listed according to organisation type.

## Care homes

People living in care homes have a higher incidence of falls than older people living in their own homes. Studies have also shown that older people living in care homes can spend up to 90 per cent of their time sitting or lying down, making it a good place to promote the Get Up and Go message.

Some individuals in care homes will need strength and flexibility training in order to build up to balance activities. Those who can stand but not walk steadily are at highest risk of falls and should be referred to specialists such as physiotherapists, occupational therapists or experienced exercise instructors qualified in working with older people with a history of falls. However, there are still simple activities that can be done under supervision to improve balance.

## Set a challenge

For someone who is unsteady on their feet, simply standing and keeping upright is an act of balance training. Challenge residents to do everyday activities that they might usually do from a chair, such as brushing their teeth, on their own two feet. This could be for a minute at a time, or a bit longer if he or she is able. Encourage them to gradually build up to longer periods through the course of the week.

For those who are more able, walking up and down stairs might be a better challenge, and one that will really help maintain bone density. Encourage individuals to set a target and build up daily.

(Check the resources section for more ideas on balance training.)

## Community and voluntary organisations

Giving a demonstration in your local town centre is a great way to interest new audiences and raise the profile of local activities. Make sure you take lots of promotional resources and enthusiasm on market day, and show the local community what being active is all about!

Enlisting the help of other organisations, such as an older people's forum or falls team, is a great way to increase the number of friendly faces and advice available on the day.

Alternatively, if your local gym has a Power Plate or BalanceMaster, contact them to see if they will organise a free session for your group. Both machines can increase muscle strength and improve balance. Check the Power Plate Locator ([http://uk.powerplate.com/EN/contactus/plate\\_locator.aspx](http://uk.powerplate.com/EN/contactus/plate_locator.aspx)) and Balance Master websites ([www.balancemaster.co.uk](http://www.balancemaster.co.uk)) for more details.



### Falls teams

Undertake some research with your clients to find out what they enjoy and what else they would like to see from the service. Use the findings to highlight the value of your service, and invite your commissioner and local MP to join you during a class or celebratory event.

### Pharmacies

Tailor a questionnaire or run a 'Did you know?' session to find out how much your patients know about falls, physical activity and local services. Get in touch with local organisations and providers of activities for older people in your area in advance so that you can signpost on to appropriate services. Most importantly, let us know what you find out!

**If physical activity is something your organisation is unable to focus on, or you would like to combine this with other topics, here are a few to consider:**

- Footcare
- Medication
- Continence
- Vision/hearing
- Home hazards
- Medical conditions, e.g. osteoporosis, arrhythmia/ syncope
- External environment: dangerous pavements, buses, etc.

For more ideas, take a look at the evaluation reports on the National Falls Awareness Week website: [www.helptheaged.org.uk/fallsday](http://www.helptheaged.org.uk/fallsday)

## Tips

### Lead by example

Involving active older people in your awareness-raising activities will be very effective; they can address barriers and issues of concern about activity with much more empathy than a younger professional.

Check out the Fit as a Fiddle ([www.ageconcern.org.uk/fitasafiddle](http://www.ageconcern.org.uk/fitasafiddle)) and Ageing Well programmes ([www.ageconcern.org.uk/ageingwell](http://www.ageconcern.org.uk/ageingwell)) for more ideas and information on group activities and peer mentoring.

Check the British Heart Foundation National Centre for a background to their Senior Peer Mentor Physical Activity Programme, 'Someone Like Me': [www.bhfactive.org.uk/older-adults/training.html](http://www.bhfactive.org.uk/older-adults/training.html)

### Encouraging participation and reaching new audiences

Consider advertising your event with your local:

- Age Concern
- radio station
- council
- library
- older people's forum (contact your council or local Age Concern for details).

### Team up

Join forces with the organisations listed above or give your event an intergenerational focus and invite your local school or youth group to take part. A guide to intergenerational work can be downloaded from:

[www.ageconcern.org.uk/AgeConcern/1B1A30381B6043519245D7D4DE617314.asp](http://www.ageconcern.org.uk/AgeConcern/1B1A30381B6043519245D7D4DE617314.asp)

## Resources

- The Thematic Network for Adapted Physical Activity has produced a motivational DVD and activity cards which are available to download from [www.thenapa2.org/publications/products/index.htm](http://www.thenapa2.org/publications/products/index.htm)
- The Policy Research Institute on Ageing and Ethnicity has produced a motivation DVD for ethnic elders, Get Active Today: [www.priae.org/projects/aim.htm](http://www.priae.org/projects/aim.htm)
- Balance training: [www.balancetraining.org.uk](http://www.balancetraining.org.uk) gives tailored information for older people on activities they enjoy which will help improve their balance.
- 'Improve your balance in 10 minutes a day': the American Geriatrics Society has put together a list of exercises that will help improve balance in just a few minutes a day: [www.laterlifetraining.co.uk/documents/ImproveYourBalance\\_ABS\\_BGS\\_06.pdf](http://www.laterlifetraining.co.uk/documents/ImproveYourBalance_ABS_BGS_06.pdf)
- Exercise and Physical Activity: your everyday guide by the National Institute on Aging gives examples of activities that can be done at home to improve strength and balance: [www.nia.nih.gov/HealthInformation/Publications/ExerciseGuide](http://www.nia.nih.gov/HealthInformation/Publications/ExerciseGuide)
- Active for Later Life is a guide to promoting physical activity with older people produced by the British Heart Foundation: [www.bhfactive.org.uk/downloads/BHF\\_AFLL\\_PDF\\_Sec1.pdf](http://www.bhfactive.org.uk/downloads/BHF_AFLL_PDF_Sec1.pdf)

Help the Aged produces a range of exercise resources devised specifically for older adults to improve strength and balance. They can be used alone or as part of a group activity.

To place an order for any of the following publications, please call 0800 009966.

### **Strength and Balance Exercises for Healthy Ageing** (book)

Demonstrating exercises to help maintain strength and balance: £6 plus p&p. Also available to download at [www.helptheaged.org.uk/slipstrips](http://www.helptheaged.org.uk/slipstrips)



### **Be Strong, Be Steady** (DVD)

A complete and progressive programme of chair-based and standing exercises which will help strengthen muscles, increase flexibility and improve balance: £12 plus p&p.



### **Step to the Future** (DVD)

Combines two levels of aerobic endurance and strength and balance exercises, including standing, chair-based and floor work, for active older people: £12 plus p&p.



## Advice leaflets

The following advice leaflets are available to order (subject to stock level). They can also be downloaded from [www.helptheaged.org.uk/advice](http://www.helptheaged.org.uk/advice), until 19 April 2010.

The following advice leaflets will not be available until 19 April 2010, but can be pre-ordered on the telephone number below.

**Better Hearing**  
**Better Sight**  
**Fitter Feet**  
**Healthy Bones**  
**Healthy Eating**  
**Your Safety**

**Staying Steady**  
**Bladder and Bowel Weakness**  
**Going into Hospital**  
**Your Health Services**

To place an order for any of the above leaflets, please call 0800 00 99 66.





## Can I get financial support for events?

Unfortunately, Age Concern and Help the Aged is unable to assist with the costs of events. However, promotional resources are available free of charge.

If there is a link between your planned event and a local business or company, you may like to approach them regarding sponsorship. As long as you are happy with what they expect in return, their support could be very useful.

You could also check your local council website for details on funding for community projects. Some councils may fund or part-fund local events. Most will also give details on grant schemes available locally through external companies and organisations. Call their main switchboard to find out more or alternatively try an internet search with your council name and the words 'funding' or 'grants'.

## How will Age Concern and Help the Aged support you?

Once you have decided on an activity or event for National Falls Awareness Week, Age Concern and Help the Aged will:

- 1. Provide promotional resources including posters, balloons, stickers, flyers and banners:**
  - Order these from the website or via the form in your pack and we will send them out to you by the end of May.
- 2. Help promote your event:**
  - With your permission, we'll add the details of your events to our website so that others can see what's going on in the area. This will also give you the opportunity to contact others in the National Falls Awareness Week network to exchange ideas and combine efforts.
- 3. Help with media coverage:**
  - Once you have registered your event, we will supply you with a guide to working with the local press so you can get the most out of your National Falls Awareness Week activity.
- 4. Support you with advice and tips:**
  - Our monthly newsletters will keep you on track and up to date with all the latest news, including any research or materials that become available.
- 5. Work to get national coverage of National Falls Awareness Week and to highlight the issue of falls prevention throughout the UK.**

## What next?

1. Decide on your National Falls Awareness Week activity.
2. Register your event with us and order resources via the form in your action pack or online at [www.helptheaged.org.uk/fallsday](http://www.helptheaged.org.uk/fallsday)
3. Check the website for further information, including factsheets, useful websites and a map of events.
4. Get organising!

## Useful websites

Age Concern and Help the Aged Falls Prevention pages:

[www.helptheaged.org.uk/slipstrips](http://www.helptheaged.org.uk/slipstrips)

Fit as a Fiddle programme: [www.ageconcern.org.uk/fitasafiddle](http://www.ageconcern.org.uk/fitasafiddle)

British Heart Foundation National Centre: [www.bhfactive.org.uk](http://www.bhfactive.org.uk)

Extend: [www.extend.org.uk](http://www.extend.org.uk)

Later Life Training: [www.laterlifetraining.co.uk](http://www.laterlifetraining.co.uk)

Register of Exercise Professionals: [www.exerciseregister.org](http://www.exerciseregister.org)

STARS (Syncope Trust and Reflex Anoxic Seizures): [www.stars.org.uk](http://www.stars.org.uk)

Prevention of Falls Network Europe: [www.profane.eu.org](http://www.profane.eu.org)

National Osteoporosis Society: [www.nos.org.uk](http://www.nos.org.uk)

Policy Research Institute on Ageing and Ethnicity (PRIAE):

[www.priae.org](http://www.priae.org)

Change4Life: [www.nhs.uk/Change4Life](http://www.nhs.uk/Change4Life)

