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Your 'falls-free' plan

Protect your independence by reducing the chance of falling



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As we grow older, gradual health changes and some medications can cause falls, but many falls can be prevented.

If you have had a fall or are worried about falling, this self assessment form will ask you questions about your general health and wellbeing to help you think about simple activities and interventions which can help you to maintain your independence and reduce your risk of a fall.

Once you have completed this form, and if you have answered 'yes' to any of the questions, take this along to your GP to discuss each of the points. He or she will be able to refer you to the appropriate services and help you with further advice.

This campaign is kindly sponsored by Home Instead Senior Care UK Ltd.

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Question 1

Have you had more than two falls in the last six months (especially if you have hurt yourself, not been able to get up again and/or lost your confidence as a result of falling)?

Yes

No

If you answered no, please go to question 2. If you answered yes, read on and discuss the points in the box below with your doctor.

- Talk with your doctor about your falls and/or concerns.
- Show this checklist to your doctor to help understand and treat your risks, and protect yourself from falls.
- Ask your doctor whether you could benefit from medication to make your bones stronger.

How many falls have you had?

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How did you fall?

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Was your fall in your home or outdoors?

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Do you have any particular concerns?

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Question 2

Do you take four or more forms of medication daily? **Yes** **No**

If you answered no, please go to question 3. If you answered yes, read on and discuss the points in the box below with your doctor.

- Ask your doctor to review your medication.
- Ask whether any of your medications can cause drowsiness, dizziness, or weakness as a side effect.
- Talk with your doctor about anything that could be a medication side effect or interaction.

List the medications you take:

Name:

Side effect:

Name:

Side effect:

Name:

Side effect:

Name:

Side effect:

Question 3

Do you have any difficulty walking or standing? **Yes** **No**

If you answered no, please go to question 4. If you answered yes, read on and discuss the points in the box below with your doctor.

- Tell your doctor if you have any pain, aching, soreness, stiffness, weakness, swelling, or numbness in your legs or feet – don't ignore these types of health problems.
- Tell your doctor about any increased difficulty walking.
- Ask your doctor whether you would benefit from a community exercise class for improving strength and balance, physiotherapy or treatment by a medical specialist.

Tick any of the following if you have experience in your legs or feet:

- Pain Soreness Weakness Numbness
 Aching Stiffness Swelling

Details of local/community exercise classes:

Question 6

Do you ever feel dizzy or light-headed, if, for example, you get up or turn around too quickly?

Yes

No

If you answered no, please go to question 7. If you answered yes, read on and discuss the points in the box below with your doctor.

- Ask your doctor to check your blood pressure, both when you are standing and when you are lying down.
- Ask your doctor to review your medication if you notice any of the above conditions.

Blood pressure when sitting down:

Blood pressure when standing:

Blood pressure when lying down:

Recommendations:

Question 7

Has it been more than two years since you had your eyes tested?

Yes

No

If you answered no, please go to question 8. If you answered yes, read on and discuss the points in the box below with your doctor.

- Make an appointment for an eye test to help protect your eyesight and your balance.

Contact details of your optician:

Appointment date:

Appointment time:

Recommendations:

Question 8

Has your hearing worsened with age, or do your family or friends say that you have a hearing problem?

Yes

No

If you answered no, please go to question 9. If you answered yes, read on and discuss the points in the box below with your doctor.

- Make an appointment for a hearing test.
- If hearing aids are recommended, practice how to use them to help protect and restore your hearing, which helps improve and protect your balance.

Appointment date:

Appointment time:

Recommendations:

Question 9

Do you usually exercise less than twice a week?

Yes

No

If you answered no, please go to question 10. If you answered yes, read on and discuss the points in the box below with your doctor.

- Join a community exercise class aimed at improving strength and balance in older adults. Ask your doctor to put you in touch with the nearest group in your area.
- Thirty minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity at least five days a week will help you to keep physically active. Targets can be achieved in ten-minute slots spread throughout the day.
- Some physical activity is better than none, take every small opportunity to be active, such as taking the stairs or doing manual tasks. At weekends, consider longer walks, cycling or swimming.

How many times a week do you exercise?

What forms of exercise?

Recommendations:

Question 10

Do you drink any alcoholic drinks daily? **Yes** **No**

If you answered no, please go to question 11. If you answered yes, read on and discuss the points in the box below with your doctor.

- Limit yourself to one alcoholic drink a day to help avoid falls.
- Ask your pharmacist whether alcohol can affect your medication.
- If you suspect that alcohol affects your balance, reduce it or cut it out.

Estimated alcohol consumption a day:

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Estimated alcohol consumption a week:

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Recommendations:

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Question 11

Do you have any long-term health conditions? For example, heart or lung problems, diabetes, high blood pressure or arthritis. Ask your doctor if you are unsure. **Yes** **No**

If you answered yes, read on and discuss the points in the box below with your doctor.

- Keep your medical appointments.
- Ask your doctor what you should do to stay healthy and active with your health conditions.
- Ask about any patient groups in your area that could help you.
- Report any health changes that cause weakness or illness as soon as possible.

Recommendations:

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The more 'Yes' answers you have, the greater your chance of having a fall. Be aware of what can cause falls, and take care of yourself to stay independent and falls-free.



Further information

Home or environmental risk factors play a role in about half of all falls. Please contact your local Age UK to get a copy of *Make your home 'falls-free'* checklist. The checklist asks about hazards found in each room of your home. For each hazard, the checklist tells you how to fix the problem.

Age UK produces a range of guides, including *Staying Steady: Improving your strength and balance* and *Caring for your eyes*, which are available to download from www.ageuk.org.uk/publications

All our guides can also be ordered free of charge by calling **0800 169 65 65**.

To contact your local Age UK, call Age UK Advice free on **0800 169 65 65** or visit www.ageuk.org.uk

Please contact your local Age UK to get a copy of *Make your home 'falls-free'*.

