

# Falls prevention for older people

A European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing priority

## WHAT ARE FALLS?



Falls are commonly defined as **"inadvertently coming to rest on the ground, floor or other lower level, excluding intentional change in position to rest on furniture, wall or other objects"**.  
Regarding falls, different understandings exist:

Older people tend to describe a fall as a **loss of balance**

Health professionals generally refer to **events** leading to injuries and ill health

## THE IMPORTANCE OF FALLS IN OLDER PEOPLE

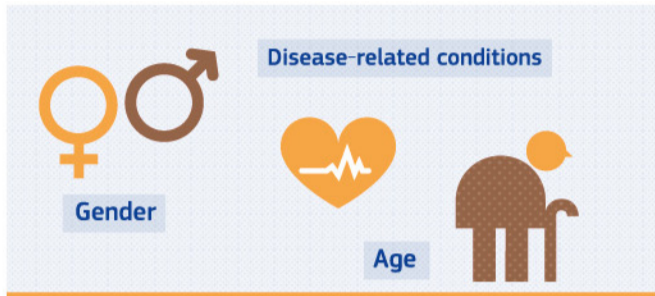
Each year **28-35%** of **PEOPLE AGED 65+** **FALL**, mostly in the home environment

Falls lead to **20-30%** of mild to **SEVERE INJURIES**

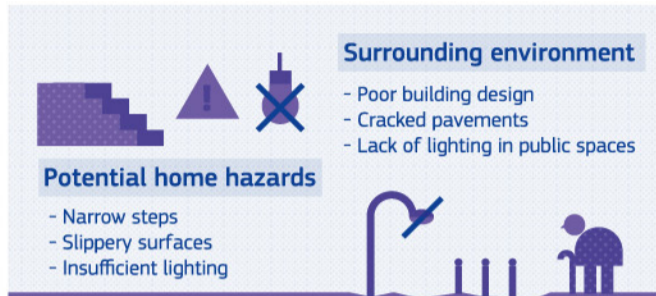
After a fall **20%** **DIE WITHIN A YEAR** due to complications of a hip fracture

## WHAT LEADS TO A FALL?

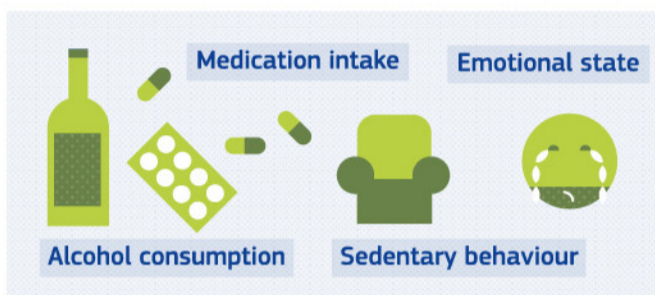
### BIOLOGICAL RISKS FACTORS



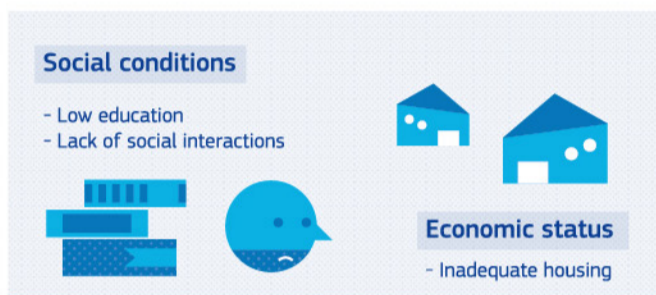
### ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS FACTORS



### BEHAVIOURAL RISK FACTORS

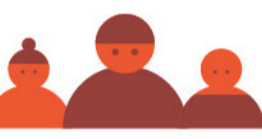


### SOCIO-ECONOMIC RISK FACTORS



Risk factors associated with falls are **identifiable**, allowing us to take appropriate action.

## WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF FALLS?



### FOR PATIENTS

- Lower quality of life
- Increased anxiety and depression
- Decreased activity and mobility
- Reduced social contact
- Higher medication use
- Increased dependence on medical and social services and informal carers
- Long-term physical disability, severe dependency or fatal injuries



### FOR HEALTH SYSTEMS

- Substantial costs of treatment and rehabilitation
- High number of older people placed in a care home after a fall



### FOR THE ECONOMY

- Loss of productivity (e.g. lost income) of individuals or family care givers taking care of fall-injured person

## WHAT ARE WE DOING TO PREVENT FALLS IN OLDER PEOPLE?

The **European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing** (EIP on AHA) supports public and private actors across the EU to improve the prevention of falls in older people through:

**INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS** to improve the awareness of older people and their families that falls are not inevitable and that prevention actions are possible



**ENVIRONMENT MODIFICATIONS** to improve living conditions:

- Age-friendly design of private housing or public environment (e.g. railings, grab bars, slip-resistant surfaces, etc.)
- ICT (Information and Communications Technology) solutions for falls detection and prevention (e.g. home monitoring)

**PREVENTION ACTIONS** focused on the promotion of healthy lifestyles (e.g. non-smoking, moderate alcohol consumption, physical activity and nutritionally adequate regimes)

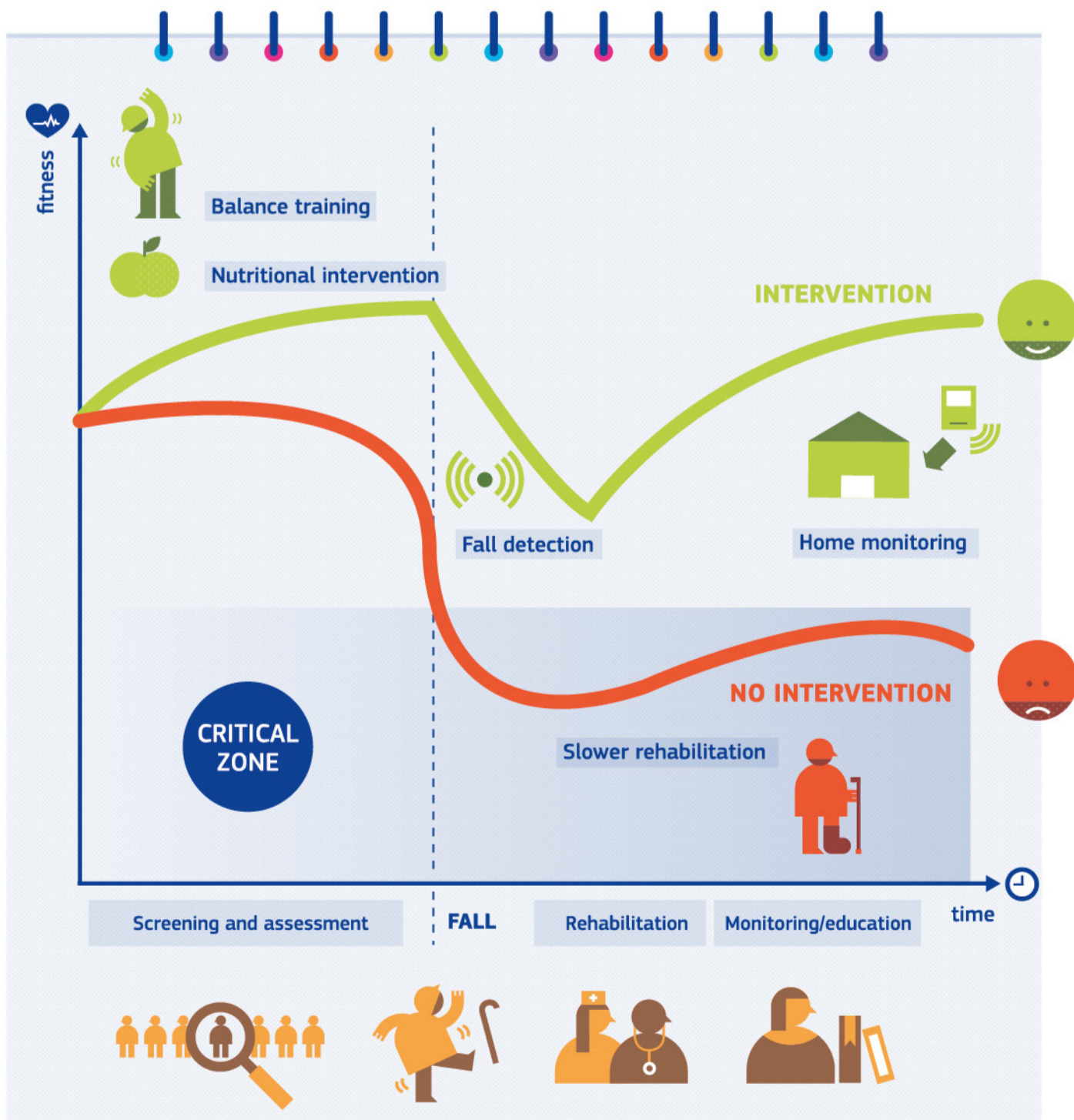


**SCREENING METHODS** to identify individuals at higher risks of falling who will benefit from tailored interventions

**COOPERATION AMONG HEALTH AND CARE PROFESSIONALS** to tailor interventions to the patient



## HOW INTERVENTION REDUCES THE NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF FALLS



Fitness increases with intervention, in the event of a fall there is a small and short time decrease in fitness.

Fitness decreases without intervention. Further to a fall there is large decrease in fitness under critical level which results in stable low fitness level under critical level.

The **European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing (EIP on AHA)**  
The European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing (EIP on AHA), set up in 2012, gathers stakeholders at EU, national and regional level from the public and private sector across different policy areas. Together they share knowledge and expertise on common interests and engage in activities and projects to find innovative solutions that meet the needs of the ageing population.

Under the framework of the EIP on AHA, the Action Group on Falls prevention works to improve the quality of life and health outcomes of older people by promoting falls prevention initiatives for older people, adjustments in their direct surrounding environments and improvements in the healthcare system.

<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/eipaha/>

