

# Falls Prevention

- Falls are a consideration for polio survivors affected by muscle weakness and fatigue
- To help prevent falls, you can make changes in and around your home
- You can also change the way you perform daily activities to prevent falls

Falls are [more common in polio survivors than the general population](#). Falls often have significant consequences due to [reduced bone density](#). They can lead to fractures and other injuries. Having falls can also make it more difficult to move around and complete daily tasks. However, there are things you can do to prevent falls. It is better to prevent falls than let fear of falling stop you from doing the things you want to do.

Firstly, it is important to talk to your general practitioner if you are having falls. Your general practitioner might refer you to a specialist for assessment. Any possible causes of falls should be investigated.

The Australian government has produced a booklet called "[Don't Fall for It](#)". This booklet has good information on "fall-proofing" yourself and your home. Please see the booklet for more information. Please also speak to your general practitioner and/or occupational therapist (OT).

This fact sheet provides a summary of things you can do to prevent falls. More information can be found on the "What To Do If You Have A Fall" fact sheet.

## Inside The Home

- **Bathroom:** Talk to your OT about equipment (rails, shower chair etc); use non-slip matting or tape in the shower; have toilet and bathroom doors re-hung to open outwards
- **Floors:** Be aware of tripping hazards; avoid cluttered walkways, remove all loose mats



- **Lighting:** make sure all areas are well lit, especially hallways and stairwells; use a night or sensor light for getting up in the night time
- **Furniture:** ensure your bed and chairs are high and firm enough to allow you to get up easily; armrests on chairs will provide support
- **Electrical Appliances:** Ensure electrical cords do not run across walkways and keep fans, heaters etc to the edges of rooms
- **Stairs And Steps:** Make sure stairs are well lit, well maintained, non-slip with contrast strips or paint on edges; ensure there is a handrail on at least one side

## Outside The Home

- Keep pathways clear of leaves, moss etc; keep tools away from walkways, prune back overhanging branches to ensure clear pathways

## General Tips To Stay On Your Feet

### Health

- Have regular medical check-ups
- Discuss any concerns about your general health, post-polio symptoms or falls risk with your general practitioner
- Keep an updated list of current medications including natural remedies
- Talk to your general practitioner if you experience side-effects from your medications, such as feeling dizzy, unsteady or drowsy
- Have your eyes checked regularly, as poor vision can increase your risk of falls
- Maintain a healthy diet, drink plenty of water, and exercise regularly
- See a [physiotherapist](#) for an exercise program to improve balance and maintain leg strength

### Walking

- Wear well-fitting shoes and avoid long clothing that you could trip over
- See an [orthotist](#) or [pedorthist](#) for an assessment for leg braces or customised shoes to improve your stability
- See a physiotherapist if you think a walking frame, crutches or other mobility aid might help you
- Make sure braces, crutches and other mobility aids are regularly re-assessed, and immediately repaired if faulty
- Maintain the rubber stoppers on your walking sticks/crutches
- Talk to your general practitioner or OT if you have difficulty managing stairs

### Everyday Activities

- Always ask for help when you need it – going out, getting up/down steps
- Avoid hurrying especially when rising from a bed or chair – allow time to adjust your balance
- Allow time to adjust when moving from light to dark or vice versa e.g. moving inside on a sunny day or getting up in the night
- Take extra care on steps or uneven ground if you wear bifocals or multi-focals
- Consider a trolley to transport items around the house
- Sit down to dress your lower body
- Mop up spills as soon as they happen
- Take care with talcum powder and cooking oil spray – they can make floors slippery
- If you fall, keep a falls diary, noting the type of fall and what contributed to it

### Individual Help

- Ask your general practitioner for a referral to see an [Occupational Therapist](#)
- View Polio Australia's [What To Do If You Have A Fall](#) fact sheet

*Some of the information from this fact sheet was provided by [Polio Services Victoria](#) and thanks to their allied health team for reviewing this fact sheet.*

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