

What To Do If You Have A Fall

- **Polio survivors are often at risk of falls**
- **It is important to prevent falls as much as possible, but sometimes they do happen**
- **There are things you can do to minimise the risk of injury if you fall**
- **There are ways to get up safely if you fall**

Polio survivors with reduced mobility, and people experiencing post-polio symptoms such as muscle weakness and fatigue, may be at risk of falls. It is important to reduce your falls risk as much as possible – please refer to the [Falls Prevention fact sheet](#) for details.

Unfortunately, sometimes falls do occur despite our best efforts to prevent them. This fact sheet gives some information on reducing injury, and getting up safely from a fall.

Preventing Injury

- **Avoid heights:** the risk of injury is greater when falling from a height. If reduced balance or fatigue are issues for you, avoid stepping onto heights such as ladders, step ladders or foot stools.
- **Remove clutter:** remove things you can trip over, and also any solid or glass items that might cause injury if you fall.
- **Keep a record:** keep a diary, recording the time of day of each fall, and what may have contributed to it. This might help you prevent similar falls in the future.
- **Get help:** have someone help you with things that require reaching up or standing on heights. Also, think about any chores that are becoming risky or difficult, and be honest about your need for help.
- **Have a plan:** an agreement for daily contact with a neighbour, a [daily call from Red Cross](#), a personal alarm pendant, keeping a mobile phone with you at all times – there are many ways to ensure help is at hand.

- **Keys:** make sure people can enter your house in an emergency – a close neighbour, or a keypad lock, might be helpful.
- **Inform:** always let your general practitioner know that you've had a fall.

Getting Up From A Fall

When you have someone with you who can help, practice getting up from the floor so you both know what to do if you have a fall.

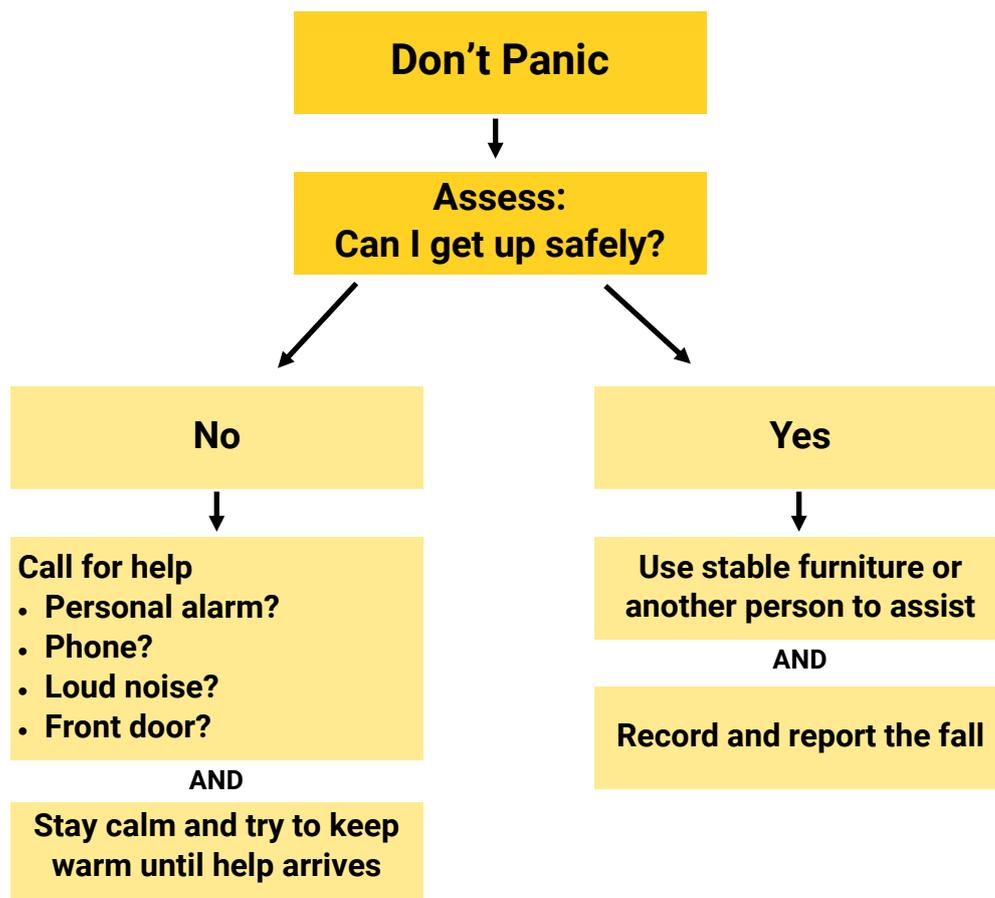
If you do fall, take some time to calm yourself. Think about whether you're too hurt to get up; if so, call for help and stay where you are.

If you can get up, make sure you use stable furniture or the help of another person. The [Don't Fall For It](#) booklet has good illustrations for getting up.

If on your own:

- pause for a moment
- find a stable chair
- roll onto your side
- crawl or drag yourself towards the chair
- kneel in front of the chair and put your arms onto the seat
- bring one knee forward and put that foot on the floor
- push up with your arms and legs and pivot onto the seat
- sit until you're ready to get up safely
- let someone know you've had a fall

Flowchart: What To Do If You Have A Fall



Some information from this fact sheet was summarised from the [Don't Fall For It](#) booklet produced by the Department of Health and Ageing. Thanks to the allied health team at [Polio Services Victoria](#) for reviewing this fact sheet.

Individual Help

- Ask your general practitioner for a referral to see an [Occupational Therapist \(OT\)](#)

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