



IGA
Institute of Geriatrics
and Active Ageing

PREVENTING FALLS AND INJURIES

Tips for Seniors



Disclaimer: The information compiled in this booklet is not intended to diagnose health problems or to substitute the medical advice or care you receive from your doctors or other healthcare providers. Always consult your healthcare providers about your medications, symptoms and health problems.

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Why is Falls Prevention Important?

About 30% of older persons aged 65 years and above experience a fall every year.

Falls can **result in serious consequences** such as injuries and fractures. In addition to injuries, it can also cause psychological fear of future falls.

Common causes of falls:



- ▶ Muscle weakness
- ▶ Poor balance
- ▶ Poor eyesight
- ▶ Medical illnesses such as stroke and arthritis
- ▶ Medications that cause drowsiness or giddiness
- ▶ Environmental factors
- ▶ High-risk behaviours

TIPS FOR PREVENTING FALLS

Footwear



Eyes



Exercise



Diet



Take Care
of *Yourself*

Bones



Walking
Aids



Postural
Hypo-
tension



Medication



Eyes

As we grow older, our **eyesight tends to be less clear**, increasing our chances of falling.

TIPS



- ▶ Check your eyesight and spectacles regularly.

- ▶ Early detection and treatment of eye diseases such as glaucoma may improve vision or prevent it from getting worse.



- ▶ Use separate spectacles for reading and to see things at a distance. Bifocal lens may make negotiating steps or kerbs difficult.

- ▶ Ensure good lighting inside and around the house.

- ▶ Highlight areas that may cause trips and falls (e.g. taping a non-slip coloured tape at the edge of the steps).





Diet

Eat a **healthy and balanced meal** to keep up your strength.

TIPS



- ▶ Eat regular meals; at least 3 times a day.
- ▶ Include a variety of food as shown in the 'My Healthy Plate'.
- ▶ Keep yourself hydrated. Drink at least 6-8 cups of water to prevent dehydration (unless your doctor advises otherwise).
- ▶ Drink more water during the day, stop 2 hours before bedtime.



Bones

Osteoporosis is a condition in which the bones become fragile and brittle, leading to higher risk of fractures (breaks or cracks) than normal bones.



Normal bone



Osteoporotic bone

TIPS

- ▶ Ensure adequate intake of calcium and Vitamin D in your diet, such as:



- Milk, yoghurt, ikan bilis, sardines, salmon, green leafy vegetables and soya bean products.
- Sunlight is a natural source of Vitamin D. Get 15 to 30 minutes of sunshine a day.

Bones



TIPS

- ▶ Perform regular weight bearing exercises such as brisk walking.
- ▶ Exercise at moderate intensity, **30 minutes each time; 5 times per week.**
- ▶ Avoid smoking or excessive alcohol intake as they are harmful to the bones.
- ▶ Consider protective devices such as hip protectors if you have fragile bones and an increased risk of falling.



Talk to your doctor if you are worried that you may have fragile bones.



Medication

Some medications can cause drowsiness and giddiness when consumed. These can be prescribed by your doctor or bought over the counter at the pharmacy e.g. cough mixture.

Older adults who **take more than 4 medications** have a higher risk of falls.

TIPS

- ▶ Follow the instructions stated on the label of your medicine container.
- ▶ Organise and label your medicines in a pill box to remind yourself what medicines to take and when to take them.



Medications all mixed up



Medications organised



Medication

TIPS

- ▶ Take only medications that are prescribed for you.
- ▶ Keep a list of your regular medications.
- ▶ Store medications in appropriate places, e.g. avoid direct sunlight or extreme heat.
- ▶ Check and discard all medications that have expired.
- ▶ Check with your doctor or pharmacist before taking over-the-counter medications and on possible side effects of your medications, such as drowsiness and giddiness.



Ask your pharmacist for assistance if you have problems managing your medications.



Postural Hypotension

This is a condition when there is a **drop in blood pressure** when one gets up from lying to standing position.

Postural hypotension can be due to medications, dehydration, medical illnesses and prolonged bed rest.

For some people, it can cause symptoms such as giddiness or fainting spells when they stand up suddenly.

General Advice

- **Prop your head up** to at least 30 degrees or sleep on 2 pillows when lying down.
- **Do not try to walk** if you are giddy or dizzy.
- **Avoid prolonged standing.** Try to sit down during activities like dressing or bathing.
- **Drink adequate amount of water** per day (unless your doctor advises otherwise).
- **Talk to your doctor** if you have any symptoms of giddiness or fainting spells.



How to get up from bed if you have postural giddiness:

- ▶ Get up **slowly** from the bed or chair to a sitting position.



- ▶ While seated, do **simple circulation exercises** such as moving your ankles up and down for 10 minutes before standing.

- ▶ **Stabilise yourself** after you stand up and before you start walking.





How can a Walking Aid help?

- Increases **stability** to prevent falls.
- Increases your **confidence** in walking and mobility level.
- **Relieves pain**, e.g. painful arthritis involving the knees.
- Reduces the effort your loved ones need when they assist you in walking.



Types of Walking Aids



Walking stick



Quadripod stick



Walking frame



Rollator frame

Consult your physiotherapist to determine if you need a walking aid and the type of walking aid that is most appropriate for you.

Using Your Walking Aid Safely

Height of a walking aid

- ▶ Measure while standing (if possible) with your arm relaxed by your side.
- ▶ The handgrip of walking aid should be at the level of your wrist crease.
- ▶ Your elbow should bend at about 30 degrees when holding the handgrip.
- ▶ Make sure your back and trunk are straight when you are using the walking aid.



Correct height
(handle or handgrip at
wrist crease level)



Elbow slightly bent
(at 30 degrees)

Keep your walking aid safe



- ▶ Make sure the rubber tip and handgrip are intact and not worn out.
- ▶ Ensure that all parts are well-adjusted and the aid feels steady when in use.

Exercise

As we grow older, we may experience difficulties with balance and walking. You may have difficulty maintaining your balance in daily activities such as walking, getting up from a chair, wearing or removing your pants.

Exercise Improves Balance

- ▶ Regular exercise can reduce falls by improving **Strength, Balance and Stability**.
- ▶ Exercise should be **performed regularly** to maximise its benefits.

General Advice

- ▶ If you have difficulty with your balance, speak to your doctor or consult a physiotherapist for a thorough assessment of your joint, muscle strength and balance.
- ▶ If you have any medical illness, talk to your doctor before starting any strenuous exercises.





Footwear

Our feet may become deformed or feel numb due to old age, chronic diseases e.g. arthritis.

- ▶ Wear **good shoes** to provide more stability.
- ▶ Avoid slippers, especially bedroom slippers.
- ▶ Wear **covered, non-slip shoes** or sandals with back strap.

Laces/Velcro or buckles
to hold foot more firmly

Sufficient cushion to
provide comfort

Deep toes
box to allow
more room
for the toes



Firm heel
counter to
provide
support when
walking

A rigid sole under the heel and
mid-foot to provide stability



The sole of the shoe should have adequate friction, not too much (cause trips) or too little (cause slips).

Talk to your doctor or a podiatrist if you have difficulty finding the right shoes due to foot deformities or swelling.

Safety Checklist

In your home

- Ensure walkway is free of clutter.
- Keep electrical or telephone cords away from the walkway.
- Ensure furniture is of appropriate height and without wheels.
- Keep things within easy reach.
- Avoid risky behaviours such as climbing on top of a chair to take things.
- Use non-slip mats or apply non-slip resistant backing under the rugs.
- Clean up spills as soon as possible.
- Highlight steps or kerbs with non-slip coloured tape.
- Install grab bars in the toilets.
- Sit down to bathe, wear or remove pants.
- Use a urine bottle or bedside commode at night if the toilet is too far away.
- Ensure adequate lighting especially at night.

Safety Checklist

When you are outdoors

- Plan your activities. Do not rush.
- Wear proper, covered, non-slip shoes.
- Watch out for slippery, uneven floor.
- Hold onto handrails when using the stairs.
- Do not multi-task, such as walking and talking on the phone at the same time.
- Use a market trolley for heavy groceries.
- Use the traffic light or pedestrian crossings.
- Use lifts instead of escalators if you are unsteady on your feet.
- Sit near the exit door in buses and trains.
- Do not stand when the bus or train is moving.
- Mind the gaps at lift entrances and train platforms.

What do you do if you FALL?

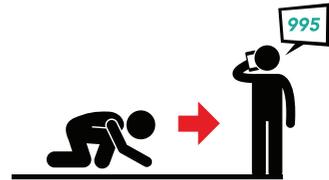
1 Do not panic, stay calm.



2 Check your body for any pain or injuries. If you have **severe pain or injuries, DO NOT MOVE.** Try to attract attention by shouting or knocking on the wall.



3 If you can move, try to crawl slowly to the phone to **call for help.**



Make a plan to get help during EMERGENCY



- ▶ Write **important phone numbers** next to the phone.
- ▶ Programme easy / **speed dial** on the phone such as '1' for daughter, '2' for son etc. for easy calling.
- ▶ Place one of the phones at a lower level or use a **cordless phone**.

Getting up from a fall



1

Roll to your uninjured side slowly.



2

Turn over to a crawling position.



3

Crawl or drag yourself to a sturdy chair with arm rest.



4

From a kneeling position, place your hands onto the seat of the chair.



5

Bring your knee forward and put that foot on the floor.



6

Push with your arms and legs into a standing position.



7

Turn gently and sit on the chair.



List of Resources



Independent Living Centers:

Rehab Mart:

<http://www.rehabmart.com.sg/>



Lifeline Corporation:

<http://www.lifeline.com.sg/>



DNR Wheels:

<http://www.dnrwheels.com/>



Assisted Living:

<http://www.assistedliving.com.sg/>

Community Caregiver Services:



NTUC Elder Care at Home:

<http://ntuhealth.sg/care-at-home/>



Comfort Keepers:

<http://www.comfortkeepers.com.sg/>

Healthcare useful links:



Health Promotion Board (HPB):

<http://hpb.gov.sg/HOPPportal/>



SG Enable:

<https://www.sgenable.sg/>



Agency for Integrated Care:

<http://www.aic.sg/>



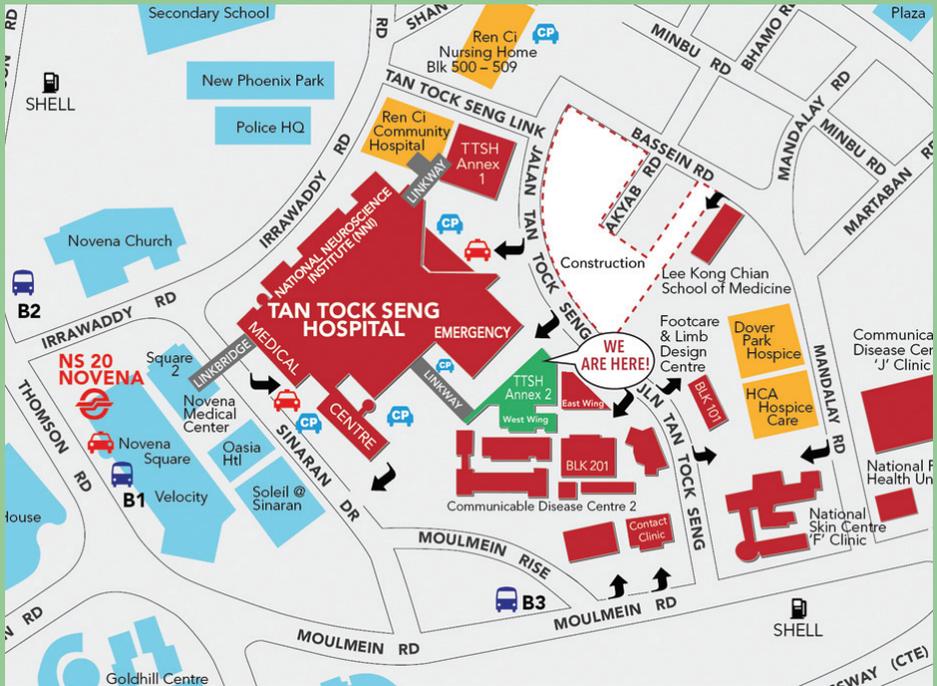
HDB EASE:

www.hdb.gov.sg/EASE-Application

Notes

Notes

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BUS & MRT SERVICES

- B1 (ALONG THOMSON ROAD) SBS : 21, 56, 57, 131, 131A, 166
 SMRT : 980
- B3 (ALONG MOULMEIN ROAD) SBS : 21, 124, 124A, 518, 518A
- NS 20 (NORTH-SOUTH LINE / NOVENA MRT)

LEGEND

-  BUS STOP
-  TAXI STAND
-  CAR PARK
-  MRT



A Community of Care

Centre for Geriatric Medicine enquiries and appointment line:

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