

Falls Prevention



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Contents

Making your Home Safer	3
Flooring	4
Lighting	4
Stairs & Steps (Indoor & Outdoor)	5
Getting In & Out of the Car	5
Kitchen	6
Bathroom & Toilet	6
Bedroom	7
Lounge Room	7
How to get up safely from the floor	8
What to do if you fall at home	10
References	11
Acknowledgements	11

Making your Home Safer

Purpose: Encourages a safer home environment to help maintain an independent lifestyle. This booklet is intended as a guide only.

This booklet provides tips to assist you in making the environment in which you live safer for you or a loved one. Many of the suggestions may involve either a low cost alternative or a suggested change in the way you currently carry out a certain activity.

If you are alone, a wearable personal alarm is an excellent way of being able to seek help if you fall. You may require assistance from a family member or home handy man in order to make some of the suggested changes.

It may be useful to seek the advice of a professional such as your visiting palliative care nurse.

If you are having falls, you should alert your health care professional at EPC. You could also have a look at EPC's Symptom Management booklet.



Flooring

Indoor

- Remove all loose mats and rugs or ensure they are firmly secured and have slip-resistant backing.
- Replace worn carpets and floor coverings and ensure there are no bumps or ripples
- Ensure the floors are free from clutter.
- Always wipe spills immediately.
- Ensure cords/cables are secured, either coiled or taped down next to the wall so you don't trip over them. If necessary have an electrician install another power point.

Outdoor

- Remove and replace uneven paving.
- Keep paths free of moss and leaves.
- Use a hose reel to store your garden hose.
- Store garden tools safely.

Lighting

- Fluorescent lighting, or globes of 75 watts or higher, are recommended in all rooms, passageways and stairwells (note some light fittings take a maximum of 60 watts).
- It is recommended that lighting should not cause excess glare or throw shadows across the room.
- Sensor lights are good for passages, hallways and entrances.
- It is recommended you have a light you can easily switch on from your bed, for example, a night light or lamp.
- Allow time for your eyes to adjust when walking from light to dark areas and vice versa.
- Stairs may need extra lighting.

Stairs & Steps

- Hand rails are recommended on at least one side preferably both sides of stairs. You may need to consult an Occupational Therapist for advice on best location. Most councils will provide an installation service at a reduced rate for pensioners.
- Replace or repair damaged stair coverings.
- Keep free from clutter.
- Keep frequently used items in places that are easy to reach and on the same level.
- Minimise the use of stairs as much as possible. If residence is multi storey consider remaining on one floor for the majority of your activity/routine.
- If necessary have someone with you when negotiating stairs.
- Stairs may require extra lighting and it is recommended that switches are accessible at the top and bottom of stairs.

Getting In & Out of the Car

- Take your time and go slowly, take a rest between house and car if necessary.
- Position any walking aids and yourself or loved one away from where the car door swings.
- If wheelchair bound, a wheelchair taxi can be booked in advance to assist getting to and from any appointments.

Kitchen

- Arrange your kitchen so the things you use most frequently are easy to reach, preferably at waist level.
- Clean up spills as soon as they occur.
- Counters and tables need to be sturdy enough to support your weight if you lean on them.
- Wall ovens are preferable to a low oven.
- Where possible avoid carrying items when walking. A kitchen trolley may assist you.

Bathroom & Toilet

- Non-slip flooring is recommended for bathrooms.
- Use a slip resistant mat in shower recess or bath.
- Handrails are recommended in and around the bath, shower and toilet.
- Use of a shower chair or stool in the shower can help prevent falls in the shower.
- When outside the shower cubicle for undressing, dressing or drying, sit on a stable chair.
- A raised toilet frame seat will assist getting on and off the toilet.
- Use liquid soap or soap on a rope.
- Remove the raised edge or lip, around the shower.
- Turn down the hot water service to 'warm'.

Bedroom

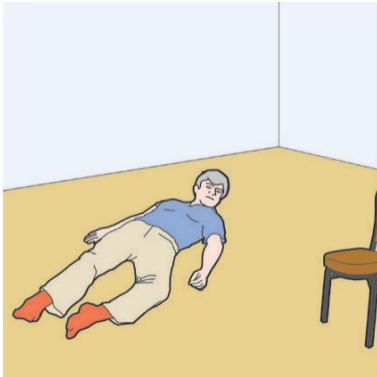
- Consider a light within easy reach of your bed eg. touch lamp. A night light is a good idea as it will provide continual light without needing to find a switch in the dark.
- Ensure your eyeglasses are within reach if you require them prior to getting up.
- Consider a telephone/mobile or personal alarm within easy reach.
- Keep bedroom floors free from clutter.
- Bed should be at a good height for getting on and off, a firm mattress makes getting out of bed easier.
- Ensure bed sheets/covers/quilts are free of the floor and not a trip hazard.
- Get out of bed slowly – sit for a short time before you stand up.
- Have your walking aid handy in case you need to get up in the night.
- Consult your palliative care nurse if you are having difficulty getting into or out of your bed.

Lounge

- Always get up slowly from a chair, get your bearings first and be aware that legs or feet may be numb or weak from sitting.
- Raised or higher chairs with solid armrests are easier to get in and out of.
- Keep phone (mobile or personal alarm) within easy reach.
- Remove furniture you do not require.
- Fans and heaters should not be in walkways or in the middle of the room.
- Move low furniture such as coffee tables to the edge of the room, not where you walk.



How to get up safely from the floor



1. Turn onto your back.



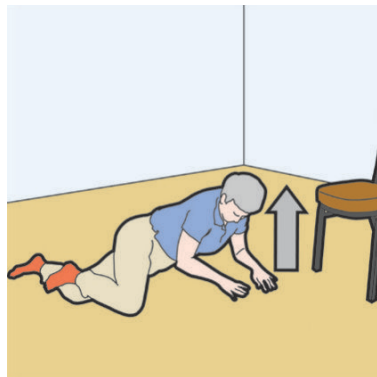
2. Roll onto your side.



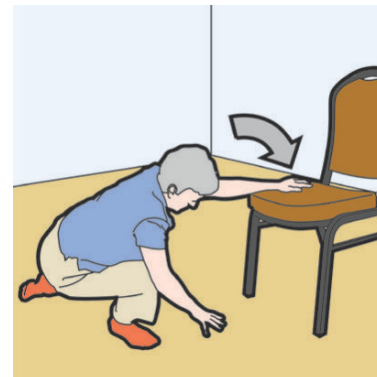
5. Place your strongest leg forward.



6. Stand up.



3. Push onto your hands.
Now, push up onto your hands and knees.



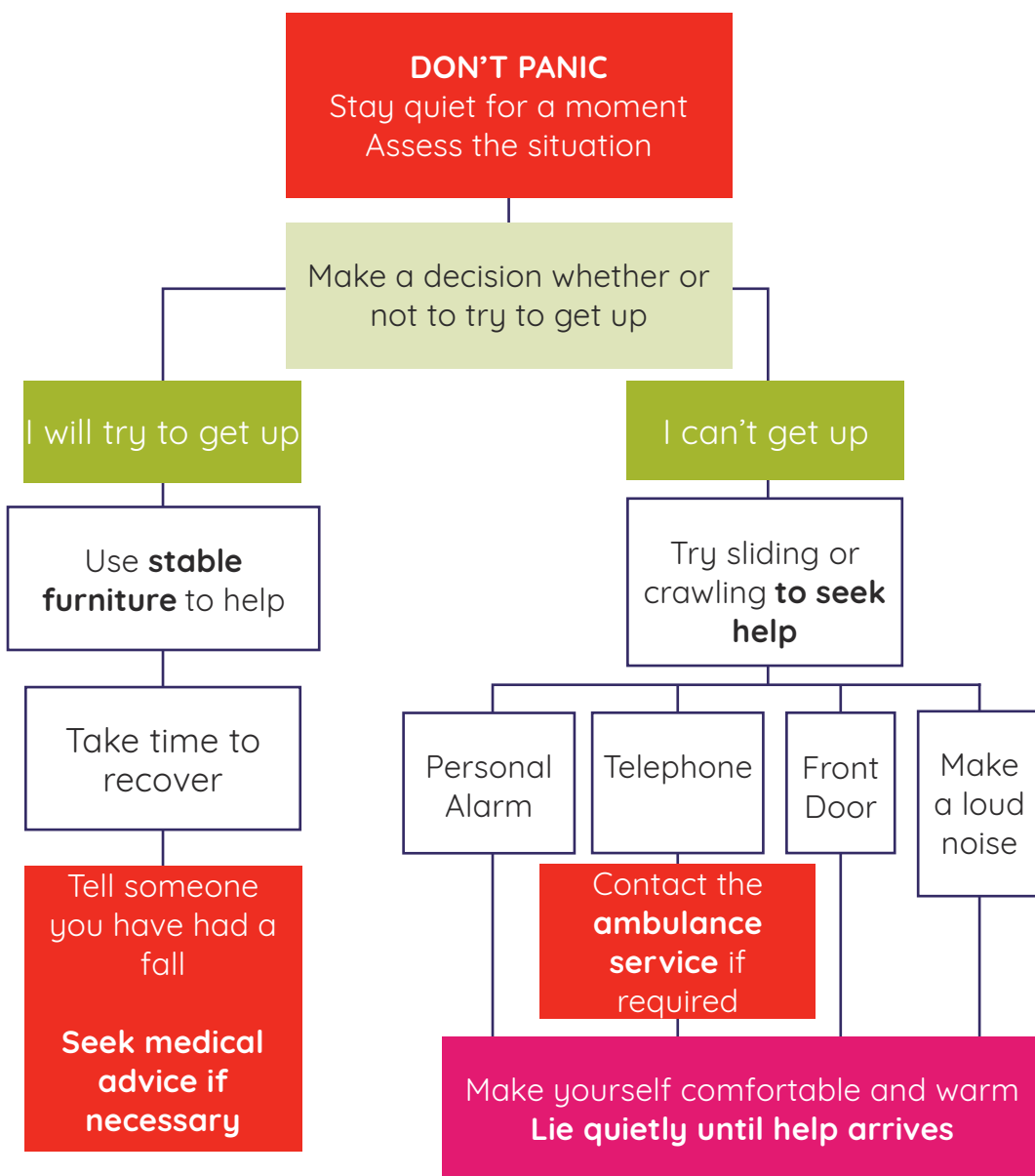
4. Kneel, using stable furniture to STEADY yourself.



7. Sit down. REST. TELL someone you have fallen!

*Images courtesy of Philips Lifeline.
Lifeline services are not available in Australia at the time.

What to do if you fall at home



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Acknowledgements

EPC staff, volunteers and clients.

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