



Fall Stop

Helping keep you steady on your feet

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SOMERSET
County Council



**I have had a fall,
I don't know why
and I'm worried it
will happen again!**

As you get older,

there is an increased risk of falling. The good news is that there are many simple things you can do to reduce the risk and things to help if you do fall.

This guide has been designed to help you maintain your independence, so read on for more information on how to find the help you need.



I need to...

See my GP to check my health

When we know why you have had a fall we can try to stop it happening again

Understanding the common causes of falling



Medication

- > Some medicines can make you feel faint, dizzy, sleepy or unsteady. If you have any concerns contact your GP or pharmacy for advice
- > If you are over 65 your GP should review your medication at least every year
- > Your pharmacist can also give helpful information and advice

Foot care

- > Foot problems or ill-fitting/worn down shoes put you at greater risk of losing your balance
- > Wear comfortable, well-fitting shoes, possibly with Velcro fastenings, avoid loose slippers
- > A chiropodist (podiatrist) can make sure your feet are healthy

Eyesight

- > Poor eyesight can lead to slips, trips and falls, especially in poor lighting
- > Have your sight checked every year
- > Some people find bifocals and variofocals may increase their risk of falling, especially if you are not used to them – discuss with your optician
- > Keeping glasses in good condition and making sure all areas of your home are well lit will help prevent any accidents

Balance and dizziness

- > Standing up quickly may cause dizziness due to a drop in blood pressure
- > If you feel dizzy when you sit or stand make sure you get up slowly
- > Keep well hydrated, have regular drinks
- > Sit down when dressing and putting on tights, stockings, socks or shoes
- > Ask your GP or practice nurse to check your blood pressure and/or medication

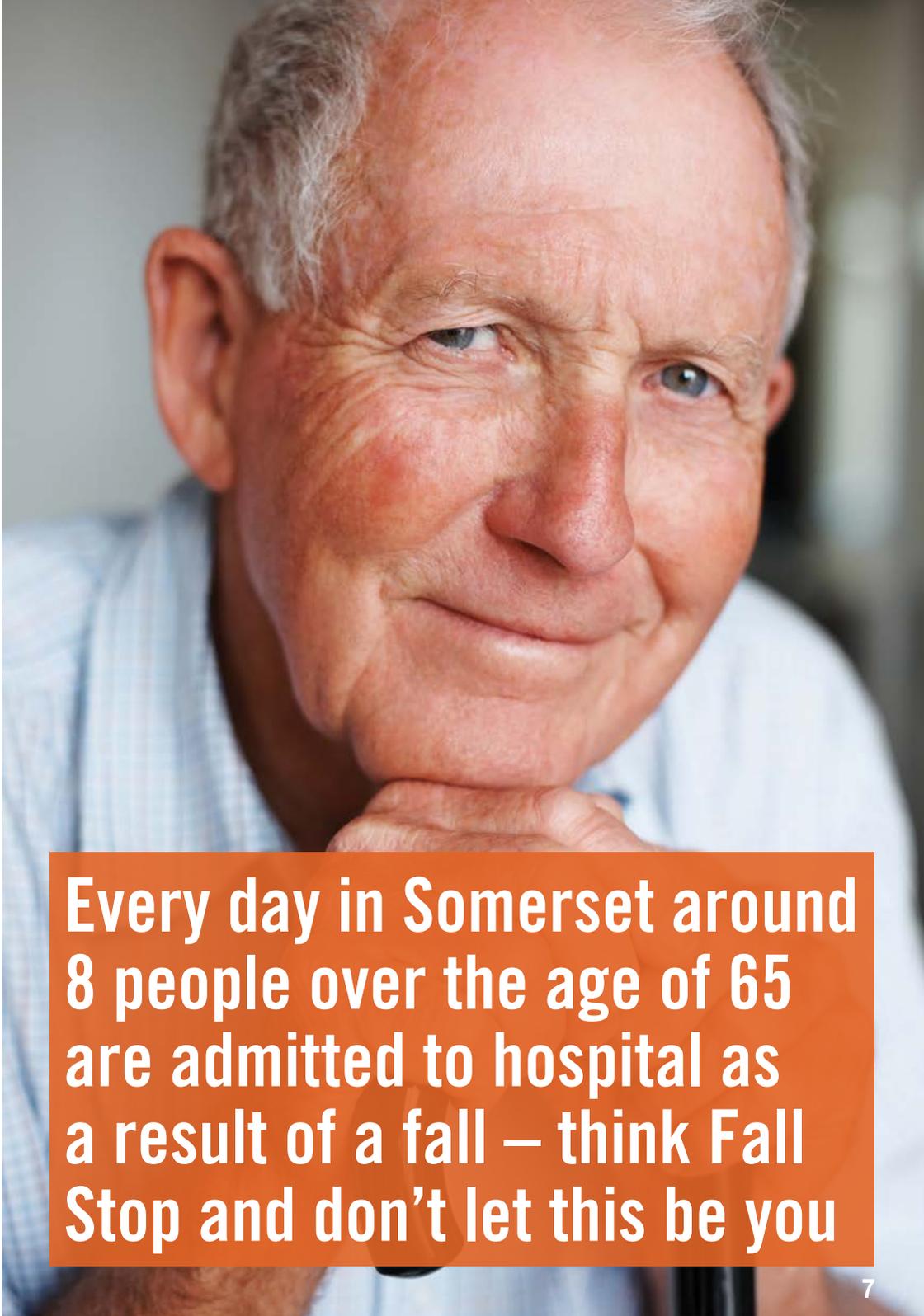
Concentration and memory

- > Poor concentration and memory problems can put you at risk of a fall
- > Poor appetite or not eating properly can affect your concentration and memory
- > If you are worried about having a fall this will affect concentration

- > Talk about your worries or fear of falling with a relative or friend
- > Your GP could also check for any underlying reason for poor memory or concentration

Frequent or urgent visits to the toilet

- > Rushing to the toilet can lead to a fall
- > Don't be embarrassed if you have problems with your bladder – talk to your practice nurse or GP
- > Not drinking enough can make problems worse
- > Avoid too much caffeine or alcohol which aggravates your bladder
- > Talk to your GP if you have bowel problems or changes to your bowel habits
- > At night, always turn on a light if getting out of bed, or leave a light on
- > Wear your community alarm at all times



Every day in Somerset around 8 people over the age of 65 are admitted to hospital as a result of a fall – think Fall Stop and don't let this be you

Keeping active

As we get older the ageing process impairs balance, muscles and joints so keeping active is really important to help reduce the impact of ageing and your risk of having a fall.

Be physically active every day, even gentle exercise such as walking can really help. Build up gradually, there are also lots of opportunities to join classes or other activities such as Health Walks. Contact Age UK for details.

Did you know if you are active you are less likely to have a fall, and less likely to break your hip if you do fall?

Do you feel less steady than you used to or are you worried about having a fall?

Many of us worry about having a fall as we get older - this can mean you lose confidence and go out less. If you have a fall this is a risk factor for falling again, many people, up to 80%, don't report a fall and won't get the support they need.

If you have concerns about your balance or your mobility speak to your GP or a health professional, they will check your health and may refer you for further assessment.

Stay Strong Stay Steady

One way to improve your balance and strength is to join a **Stay Strong Stay Steady** class in Somerset.

These classes use movements which are evidence based to improve your strength and balance and help increase confidence.

Before joining a class, you will need to complete a short health questionnaire.

For more information about these and many other classes go to the **Age UK Somerset** website www.ageuksomerset.org.uk

call them on **01823 345626**
or email ageingwell@ageuksomerset.org.uk

Here are some things people say about the Stay Strong Stay Steady classes:

'While it is only 4 weeks since starting I have noticed a difference in my confidence, such that I now 'slide out' in my walking, which has been rubbish for many years - I have a dream to take up line dancing!' Tom (83)

'I now walk to my neighbours, which I have been unable to do before' Joan (84)

'My balance is improving, and the class is really good' Margaret (79)

'A work in progress making me more confident' Anne (75)

Your best defence against falls...

Healthy body

- > Bones do get thinner with age. To keep them strong include lots of calcium and vitamin D in your diet. Drink milk and eat dairy products, meat, fish, poultry, fruit and vegetables
- > Sunlight is the main source of vitamin D, so aim for 15 minutes a day of sun on your skin during the summer months, without sunscreen, taking care not to burn
- > Keep yourself as active as possible to help avoid the risk of weight problems which can lead to more serious illnesses such as heart disease, diabetes and strokes
- > Do activities to maintain your muscle strength and bone strength at least twice a week, such as walking, gardening, or even carrying shopping
- > Some activities can help improve your balance and co-ordination, these include dancing, tai chi and balance exercises
- > Don't sit for long periods this is linked to being overweight, type 2 diabetes and some types of cancer. Get up and move around to keep your circulation healthy at least every hour
- > Ask your doctor if you could benefit from medication to make your bones stronger

Safe at home

Tripping hazards

- > Replace or repair worn or loose floor coverings
- > Get rid of loose scatter rugs
- > Mop up spills straight away
- > Good lighting is important so make sure your home is well lit
- > Make sure there are no trailing flexes or wires
- > Avoid clothes which are too long
- > Keep the floor and stairs free from clutter
- > Know where your pets are and keep them from under your feet
- > Outside your home look out for uneven and broken paths and pavements and keep paths clear. If it is icy, wet or windy stay indoors

A helping hand

- > Consider a community alarm (Lifeline), this will give you peace of mind
- > Keep items you use most often in places that are easy to reach. If necessary buy reaching aids
- > Keep a telephone by your chair so you don't rush to get up and answer it
- > Perhaps fit a cage to your front door to collect post to avoid bending down
- > Fit a key safe so others can access your property to check on you
- > Have handrails fitted if necessary
- > Adult social care can advise on equipment to make you safer and more independent at home

Phone Somerset Direct on 0300 123 2224

We want to help you stay independent...

Useful contacts:

Age UK Somerset

Activity classes **01823 345626** Information and advice **01823 345613**

Toe nail cutting **01823 345610** www.ageuksomerset.org.uk

NHS 111 service

Phone **111**. The service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year

Somerset Direct and adult social care

0300 123 2224 Email: adults@somerset.gov.uk Text Phone: **07781 482858**

Useful Websites:

Somerset Choices www.somersetchoices.org.uk provides information on local services, and advice to help you choose the right care and support and stay as independent as you can

National Osteoporosis Society www.nos.org.uk for advice on how to keep your bones strong, or if you have osteoporosis

Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership www.sasp.co.uk to find activities in your local area

This leaflet has been produced by Somerset County Council Public Health Team

For further copies go to www.healthysomerset.co.uk/resources

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