

## Falls Prevention

This leaflet is intended to provide simple practical information about how you can avoid the risk of falling.

### How to choose shoes

- Wearing poorly fitting slippers or shoes can make you shuffle and upset your balance.
- The shoe should be the correct length, width and depth for your foot. There should be 1 cm or 0.5 inches between the end of your longest toe and the end of your shoe.
- The upper should be soft with no hard seams or ridges and made from a natural fibre such as leather which allows moisture to evaporate.
- The shoe needs to hold your foot firmly in place with an adjustable fastening, i.e. laces, straps with buckles or Velcro.
- The toe box should be round and deep to give the toes room to move.

The shoe needs a firm heel counter that fits snugly around the back of the heel and helps to maintain and stabilise the heel in place as the shoe makes contact with the ground.

- Ideally the shoe will have a thick, lightweight, flexible rubber sole of a non-slip material.
- Have your feet measured and your shoes checked by a trained shoe fitter, whatever your age.
- Slip-on shoes can harm your feet and strain your ankles.

- Choose a lightweight shoe to avoid shuffling.
- Many people slip, trip or stumble because of a slippery sole.
- Leather soles are generally slippery.
- If you suffer from a condition which causes you to shuffle your feet, a non-slip sole may not be best for you.
- High heels affect your balance.
- Shoes with a continuous sole and low broad heels are safest as they give good ground contact.

### Choose appropriate shoes

- A cushioned, flexible shoe e.g. running shoes, protect the feet from hard and uneven surfaces and are shock absorbing. Look for something similar in your daily shoe.
- Boots with ankle support are vital when walking on uneven surfaces.
- Flat slippers that cover the whole foot with non-skid soles are good for cold winter nights. Socks are too slippery on smooth surfaces. Slippers should have a back (heel counter) to hold the foot firm and a Velcro fastening.
- A well-fitting shoe will always provide better support than a well-fitting slipper, so wear a suitable shoe at home instead of slippers, especially if you are unsteady on your feet.
- Keep your shoes in good repair. Check that the sole and upper are firmly attached, with no holes or uneven heel wear.

## Look after your feet

- Painful feet can cause you to walk awkwardly and put you at risk of stumbling.
- Inspect your feet daily for any problems.
- Care for your nails by filing them straight across and not too short. Do this twice a week with a long handled nail file sitting in a chair with arms and with your foot placed on a stool.
- Corns and callus can be filed.
- Use a moisturising cream regularly on any areas of dry skin, but not between the toes.
- If you have a history of regular falls, or if you have any concerns about your feet, ask your doctor to refer you to an occupational therapist, physiotherapist or podiatrist (Health and Care Professions Council Registered) as appropriate.

## **Pace yourself**

- Plan ahead so that there is no need to hurry. Slowing down will help you to maintain an upright posture.
- Do not do too much at once. Plan your week so the daily chores are evenly distributed.
- Look where you are going. If you want to look at something, stop, then look. Watch where you are putting your feet. Be aware of possible loose or broken paving stones, raised drain covers, small steps and other obstacles.
- At home, remove any rugs and lift your feet as you walk.
- Improper use of medications can cause many problems, including falls.
- Always take medications as directed (time, intervals and dosage). Always discuss any medications, including herbal remedies with your doctor and pharmacist. If any medication makes you feel dizzy, inform your doctor.

You can search for other information leaflets on [www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk) or contact:  
Age UK: 020 7278 1114  
NHS Direct: 0845 4647

It is recommended that you follow the advice in this leaflet and only contact the podiatry department should you have any concerns about your feet or footwear.

If you are aged between 19-60 years you will need a G.P or other health professional referral.

Please contact the Podiatry Appointment Office 01803 217712

If you:

- require further information
- require this leaflet in a different format

Torbay and South Devon   
NHS Foundation Trust



**PATIENT  
INFORMATION**

## **Falls Prevention**

Department of Podiatry  
and Foot Health