

The World Health Organisation defines a fall as "inadvertently coming to rest on the ground, floor or lower level, excluding intentional change in position to rest in furniture, wall or other objects".

## Leading Causes of Falls

- Changes to gait, balance and strength
- Altered perception of functional ability
- Fear of falling
- Visual impairment
- Cognitive impairment and/or reduced neurological function (Dementia, Stroke)
- Urinary incontinence
- Presence of home hazards
- Health problems (Cardiac conditions, Parkinson's, Diabetes, Arthritis)
- Prescribed Medications

Most falls are caused by slipping or tripping, not by dizziness or disorientation. Muscles become weaker, reflexes become slower, sensation is reduced, joints become stiffer, and balance worsens. Environmental factors can contribute: clutter, stairs, pets, rugs, poor lighting, uneven ground, poor footwear.

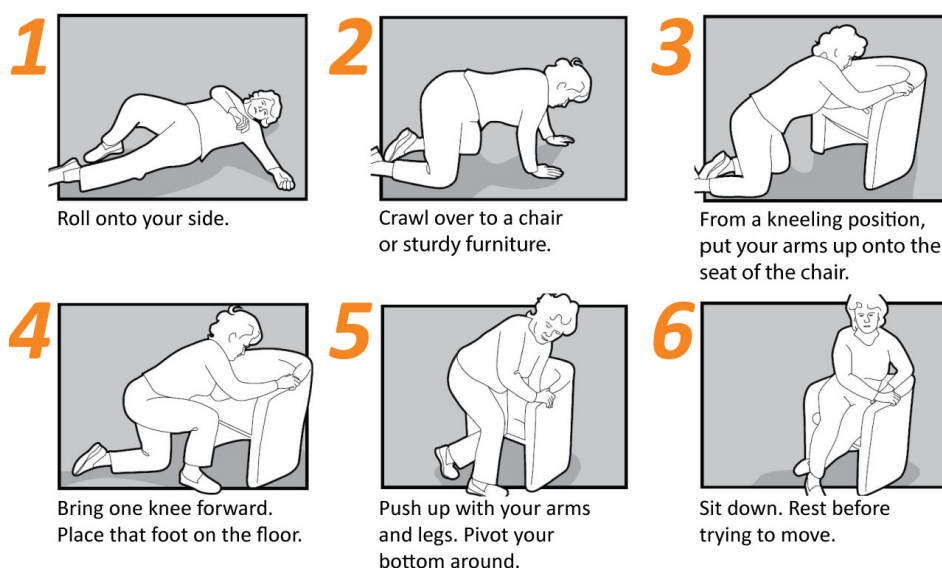
## Goals for people at a high falls risk

- Prevent further falls: with management strategies
- Ensure there are plans in place, if a fall occurs: see below.
- Aiming to restore confidence and self esteem
- Ensure environments are hazard free, and as safe as possible

## Management of Falls

If you have sustained a fall, the first thing is to calm yourself down by taking deep breaths. Then make sure you check your body to ensure there are no injuries.

How to get up from a fall if you are not injured:



Source: [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)

If you are injured, you need to call for help. This can be done through a personal alarm if you live by yourself, or calling out to someone who you live with. Having a mobile phone is also a good way to call for help. Make sure you already have these plans in place, as you never know when you might fall!

## Prevention

- Ensure you keep fit and healthy
- Be aware of you limitations
- Invest in some hip protectors to reduce your chance of hip fractures
- Make sure you have supportive footwear
- Increase the amount of lighting in areas
- Reduce clutter and obstacles around the house
- Remove rugs or mats if they are not secured
- Don't rush!

Go seek help if you require it from any allied health or medical professionals. Here is a list below of what they can help you with.

## Physiotherapists and Exercise Physiologists can help with:

- Keeping people physically active every day
- Regular strength and balance training (exercise programs should be completed at least 2 x week, for a minimum of 6 months)
- Referrals to tai chi or other exercise programs
- Physios may also suggest gait aids that assist with increasing stability and confidence

## Occupational Therapists can help with:

- Home modification to make homes safer
- These include reducing tripping hazards, adding rails/grab bars, helping to reduce risk of slips, reducing clutter in the house and much more!

## Podiatrists can help with:

- Ensuring footwear is safe to reduce slipping/tripping
- Assessing foot conditions that may change the way people walk

## Dieticians can help with:

- Ensuring there is enough calcium and Vitamin D in diets. These are needed to help build strength, and reduce fatigue levels.

## GPs can help with:

- Reviewing medication list
- Identifying any medications that may cause dizziness or drowsiness
- Referring to get your eyes tested (Can also go to Vision Australia)
- Hearing tests

