Government of Western Australia
Department of Health

Your Home Safety Checklist

Falls can be prevented
Take action to stay
mobile and independent

Stay On Your Feet WA

Shetland Islands Council

NHS Shetland

Stay On Your Feet WA® is a collaborative falls prevention program aimed at reducing the incidence and severity of fall-related injuries among older people

Acknowledgments

North Coast Public Health Unit, District and Area Health Promotion Units, Queensland Health, Independent Living Centre at Ryde and the Arthritis Foundation of Victoria (Inc.).

SIMPLE STEPS TO STAY ON YOUR FEET®

Falls have enormous social, health and economic costs for both older people and the whole community. One in four people 60 years and over will fall each year.

The good news is that falls can be prevented.

There are nine steps you can take to stay on your feet® and reduce the risk of a fall:

- Step 1: Be Active
- Step 2: Manage Your Medicines
- Step 3: Manage Your Health
- Step 4: Improve Your Balance
- Step 5: Walk Tall
- Step 6: Foot Care and Footwear
- Step 7: Regularly Check Your Eyesight
- Step 8: Eat Well for Life
- Step 9: Identify, Remove and Report Hazards

As part of Step 9: Identify, Remove and Report Hazards, there are some simple actions you can take to make your home and surrounding environment safer and maintain an independent lifestyle.

This checklist is a guide to those actions, and includes a series of questions that look at safety in and around your home.

If you answer ‘no’ to any of the questions, the checklist suggests action you can take to make your home safer. Most changes are easy and inexpensive. Many of the items you may need such as paint, hand rails, slip-resistant strips and lighting are available from hardware or department stores. Sales assistants or local service organisations will usually be able to help arrange someone to install the items where necessary.

Your local Occupational Therapist can also be contacted if you have specific needs. Your local pharmacy may also have home safety products available for purchase.

It’s up to you to take steps to stay mobile and independent and prevent falls before they happen.

Tick one box

	FLOORS	Yes	No
1	Do your carpets and mats lie flat without wrinkles or curled edges?		
2	Do loose mats have a slip-resistant backing?		
3	Do you clean up spills as soon as they occur?		
4	Are floors free of clutter?		
5	Are all cords safely away from passageways and walkways?		
6	Are floor surfaces non slip?		
7	If you have pets, are they kept away so that they don't get under your feet or lie in passageways?		

Tick one box

	Lighting	Yes	No
1	Are your lights bright enough for you to see clearly?		
2	Are stairs and steps well lit?		
3	Are light switches easy to reach and near each doorway?		
4	Can you easily switch on a light from your bed?		
5	Is there good lighting where you keep medicines?		

Suggestions

- You are less likely to slip on surfaces such as carpet or slip-resistant tiles. These surfaces are preferable to polished floors which can be very slippery.
- Always wipe up spills as soon as they occur. Some floor surfaces are particularly slippery when wet.
- There are also ‘paint-on’ non-slip products.
- Remove all loose mats or ensure they are firmly secured and have non-slip underlay.
- Make sure your carpets are in good condition.
- Re-arrange furniture to provide easy access to rooms, entrances and exits.
- Try to avoid extension cords by having extra power switches installed or re-arranging appliances closer to points.
- Place a bell on your pet’s collar so that you always know where it is and place your pet’s bed in the laundry. Obedience classes may also be useful.

Suggestions

- It is recommended to use 75-watt bulbs in all rooms, passageways and stairwells. (Note that some light fittings take a maximum of 60 watts).
- Nightlights are an inexpensive way to provide light to dark passageways at night.
- Consider installing movement activated or photo-electric lights (sensor lights) to illuminate passageways, or simply leave a light on in the passageway at night. Try coloured lighting if this proves too bright. Fluorescent lights are cheaper to run.
- Have extra lights installed or place lamps in dark areas.
- Reduce glare by placing shades over lights, adjusting window blinds or using pearl light globes.
- In bedrooms, use a bedside lamp as well as overhead lights or have dual switches installed – one beside the bed and one at the entrance to the room.
- Make sure lighting is even. Ageing makes night vision less effective. Allow time for your eyes to adjust when going to and from light and dark areas.

Tick one box

	STAIRS, STEPS AND LADDERS	Yes	No
1	Can you see the edges of the steps clearly?		
2	Are stairs and steps well lit?		
3	Is there a light switch at top and bottom of stairs?		
4	Are non-skid treads or paint used on the edges of each step?		
5	Are floor coverings on steps in good condition?		
6	Do the steps have a sturdy handrail?		
7	Is your stepladder or step-stool short and sturdy with anti-slip feet?		

Tick one box

	KITCHEN	Yes	No
1	Can you easily reach kitchen items you use regularly without climbing, bending or upsetting your balance?		
2	Is there good lighting over work areas?		
3	Do you mop up spills immediately?		
4	Is there good ventilation to reduce the risk of spectacles fogging?		

Suggestions

- Stairs may need extra lighting.
- Lights which turn on automatically are recommended.
- Handrails on both sides of steps are preferable where possible and ensure that they extend the full length of the stairs or make sure there are handrails on at least one side of all stairways.
- Move frequently used items for easy access to reduce the need for ladders.
- Ensure your stepladder is in good condition. Ladders with handrails are recommended. Have someone with you if it is necessary to use a ladder.
- Paint edges of steps white or yellow to see them better or apply contrasting, non-slip adhesive strips to stair edges. Ensure you have light-coloured, short-piled carpet if steps are carpeted.

Suggestions

- Arrange your kitchen so the most frequently used items are easy to reach (between hip and eye level). Baskets installed inside cupboard doors can provide extra storage space.
- Put rarely used things away – lighter items should be stored up high and heavy items lower down.
- A kitchen trolley allows you to transport more items with increased safety.
- Worktop and tables should be sturdy enough to support your weight if you lean on them.
- Cooker, vents or exhaust fans can be installed to provide better ventilation when cooking.
- If possible, install a wall oven with a side opening door, rather than a low oven.
- Use a broad-based, sturdy and secure ladder if it is absolutely necessary to reach high places.
- Wear rubber-soled shoes in the kitchen. Never walk around in socks.

Tick one box

	BATHROOM AND TOILET	Yes	No
1	Do you use slip-resistant mats in the bathrooms?		
2	Is the soap, shampoo and towel within easy reach so you don't have to bend or reach too far?		
3	Are you able to get out of the bath or shower without holding on to taps or towel rails?		
4	Do you have handrails in the bath and shower?		
5	Can you easily get on and off the toilet seat?		
6	Are you able to walk directly into your shower without stepping over a raised edge?		
7	Is your bathroom floor non-slip when wet?		

Tick one box

	LOUNGE ROOM	Yes	No
1	Can you get in and out of your lounge chair easily?		
2	Are all cords, furniture and clutter kept away from walkways?		
3	Is your furniture placed so that you don't have to stretch or lean too far to open windows?		

Suggestions

- Ensure shower doors are made of safety glass or replace with a shower curtain.
- There is an increased risk of the floor being slippery when wet and therefore hazardous. Take extra care when on a wet surface.
- Slip-resistant flooring is recommended for bathrooms.
- Paint-on applications or self-adhesive non-slip strips are advisable in the shower and bath.
- Handrails are recommended in all positions around the bath and toilet. Never use a towel rail to support body weight.
- Hand-held shower hoses are a good idea, as are shower chairs or bath seats. Occupational Therapists can advise you on handrails and other equipment for modifications to your bathroom to ensure your maximum safety and independence.
- Move soap holders to a position within reach or use soap-on-a-rope. Try placing your soap into a stocking leg and tying it to the tap or shower rest.
- Taps that are difficult to turn on or off may require a washer change or a tap turner. Information about tap-turning gadgets can be obtained from Occupational Therapists.
- Ensure door to toilet opens outwards or change to a concertina sliding door. (If you fall when in the toilet it can be very difficult for someone to get you out even if the door has lift off hinges.)

Suggestions

- Higher chairs and chairs with solid armrests are easier to get in and out of. Lower chairs where hips are lower than knees in sitting position are difficult to get out of.
- Keep walkways clear of telephone and electrical cords.
- Fans and heaters should not be placed in walkways or in the middle of the room.
- Remove loose rugs or apply slip-resistant backing or secure by other means.

Tick one box

	BEDROOM	Yes	No
1	Are you able to turn on a light easily before you get out of bed?		
2	Can you easily get in and out of your bed?		
3	Do you have a telephone in the bedroom?		
4	Is your electric blanket cord safely secured so you don't trip? Is the control easy to reach from the bed?		
5	Are your bed covers off the floor (i.e. not trailing)?		
6	If you use walking aids, are they easy to reach before you get out of bed?		

Tick one box

	CLOTHING AND FOOTWEAR	Yes	No
1	Do you wear shoes with non-slip soles?		
2	Do your shoes have rounded broad heels?		
3	Do you wear outdoor shoes rather than slippers outside the house?		
4	Does your clothing fit securely with no dangling cords or hems?		

Suggestions

- Have a light within reach of your bed. Consider a touch lamp or night light. Keep a torch next to your bed at night.
- Keep floors free of clutter in the bedroom.
- Remove or secure loose telephone and electrical cords in the bedroom and out of walkways.
- Consider using a cordless telephone. You need to only have one telephone line and can take the phone with you to bed or outside. (Please remember that they have to be recharged).
- Ensure your spectacles are easy to reach if you need them when you get out of bed.
- A firm mattress provides support. This will make getting into and out of bed easier. Beds should be at a good height for easy movement on or off.
- Get out of bed slowly – sit up before you stand up to prevent dizziness.
- If you are having difficulty getting in or out of your bed, discuss this issue with an Occupational Therapist or Community Nurse.

Suggestions

- Shoes and slippers should have non-slip soles with patterned tread and rounded, broad heels.
- Avoid wearing socks only, loose-fitting slippers, leather or other slippery soles and high heels.
- Clothing should be short enough to avoid tripping (particularly nighties and dressing gowns).
- Sit down rather than trying to balance on one leg when dressing.

Tick one box

	OUTSIDE YOUR HOUSE	Yes	No
1	Are the edges of steps clearly marked?		
2	Do step edges have an adhesive non-slip strip?		
3	Do steps have a sturdy, easy-to-grip handrail?		
4	Are the paths around the house in good repair?		
5	Are the paths and entrances well lit at night?		
6	Is the garden kept free of hazards (e.g. tools, hoses)?		
7	Are your garage floors free from grease and oil?		
8	Are the public areas around your house in good repair?		

Suggestions

- Make sure all outside steps are highly visible by painting the front edge of the step a contrasting colour or by putting on a non-slip tread.
- See suggestions about steps on page 5.
- Paths need to be even and unbroken.
- Keep paths free from moss and leaves, and take extra care in wet conditions.
- Store garden tools safely. Use a hose reel to store your garden hose.
- Contact your local council to advise them of problem areas near your home.

YOUR HOME SAFETY ACTION PLAN

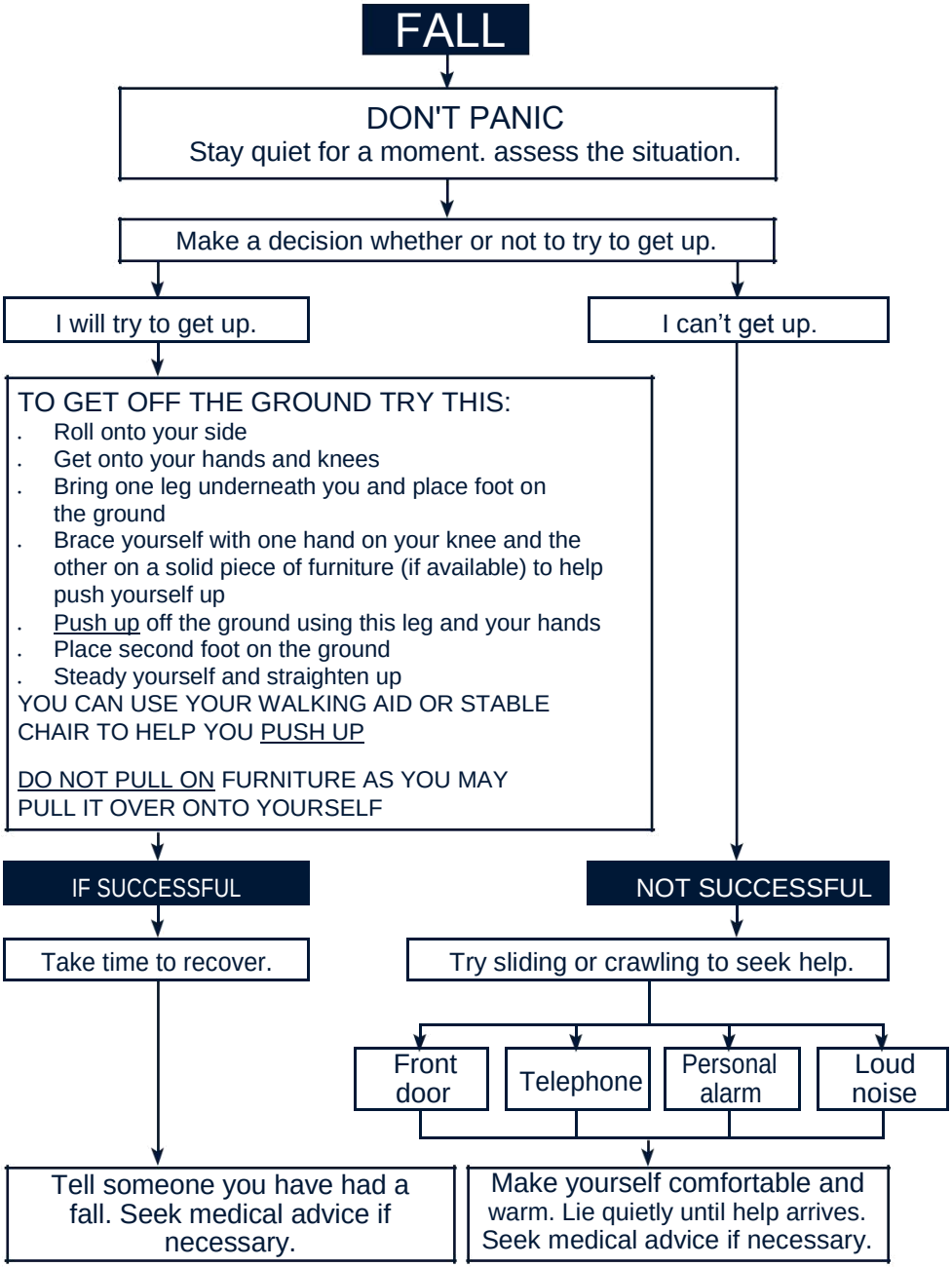
Having reviewed the status of your home and surrounding environment with regard to falls, you can take now steps to reduce your risk.

Refer back to the pages where you have answered ‘no’ to any of the questions, note the relevant action from the suggestions area and record these here. You may even think of more actions of to add.

Alternatively, highlight the suggestions that relate to you and tick them off as you complete each one.

ACTIONS	COMPLETED

What to do if you fall at home



For minor adaptations that you have identified such as grab rails or improved access contact:

Private Housing

Hjaltland One Stop Shop
2 Harbour Street
Lerwick
Shetland
ZE1 0LR

Telephone 01595 741368

Council Housing

Shetland Islands Council
Housing Services
Department of Education & Social Care
6 North Ness Business Park
Lerwick
ZE1 0LZ

Telephone 01595 744360

If further specialist assessment is required, please contact an Occupational Therapist at Independent Living Centre, Gremista, Lerwick on 744319.

NHS Shetland

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