

I want to stay independent: Slips, trips and broken hips are not for me

Preventing Falls and Harm From Falls in Older People:
Best Practice Guidelines for Australian Residential Aged Care Facilities 2009

Did you know that nearly half of all people living in residential aged care facilities fall each year? While some falls cause no injuries, others can cause serious harm. Falls can also result in you fearing further falls and make it harder for you to stay independent.

There are usually a number of reasons for someone falling. These may include poor balance, incontinence, unfamiliar environments and obstacles in the environment, poor eyesight, unsafe footwear and some medicines, to name a few.

Aged care staff can help you to reduce your risk of falling by:

- helping you to settle in, keeping your surroundings safe, and providing you with falls prevention information
- assessing your risk of falling and discussing the results with you
- developing and implementing a care plan suited to your needs (your risk of falling will be reviewed regularly)
- organising other health professionals to manage the causes of you being at risk of falling.

Everyone has a role to play in preventing falls.

What can you do?

- Be active every day in as many ways as you can; participate in supervised exercise classes at your facility.
- Wear comfortable clothing that is not too long or loose. Whenever you are up and about, wear comfortable, low-heeled and nonslip shoes that fit you well, rather than slippers.
- Use your call bell when you require assistance, especially for going to the bathroom, and keep the call bell in easy reach.

- Take your time when getting up from sitting or lying down.
- If you have your prescribed walking aid, make sure it is in good condition and that you use it rather than using furniture or walls for balance.
- Let staff know if you feel unwell or unsteady on your feet.
- If staff recommend that you need assistance or supervision when moving, please ask them for this assistance and wait until they come to help you.
- Look out for environmental hazards such as spills and clutter that may cause a fall, and tell staff about them promptly.
- If you have spectacles, only wear your distance ones when walking. Take special care when using bifocal or multifocal glasses.
- Eat healthily and keep your fluid levels up, because dehydration can disorient you.
- Wear your hip protectors if you have them.

What happens if you fall?

If you do fall, staff should take action to identify what contributed to your fall and reduce the risk of you falling again. You may be assessed by a doctor, and staff will repeat some or all of your fall risk assessment. This may mean that your care plan is changed. However, any changes to your care plan will be discussed with you.

This fact sheet has been adapted from *Preventing Falls and Harm From Falls in Older People: Best Practice Guidelines for Australian Residential Aged Care Facilities 2009*, developed by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care.

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1. *Preventing Falls and Harm From Falls in Older People: Best Practice Guidelines for Australian Residential Aged Care Facilities 2009.*



The following resources have been developed to assist implementation of the Falls Guidelines:

2. *Guidebook for Preventing Falls and Harm From Falls in Older People: Australian Residential Aged Care Facilities 2009.*

A Short Version of Preventing Falls and Harm From Falls in Older People: Best Practice Guidelines for Australian Residential Aged Care Facilities 2009.

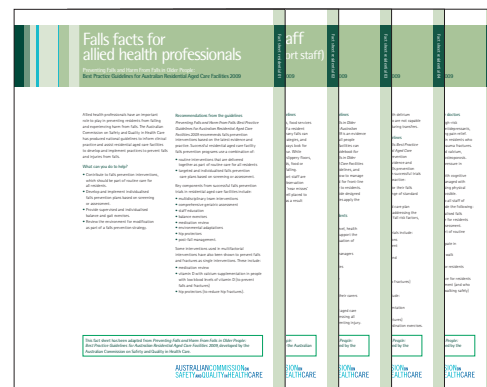


3. *I Want to Stay Independent: Slips, Trips and Broken Hips Are Not For Me – Consumer Guide.*



4. *Fact sheets:*

- Falls facts for support staff
- Falls facts for allied health professionals
- Falls facts for health managers
- Falls facts for nurses
- Falls facts for doctors.



All publications are available from the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care website www.safetyandquality.gov.au

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