

Some facts on falls

We all have tripped over the edge of a paving slab or have slipped on a wet floor. Most definitely we thought "What a lucky escape - I didn't fall!" But if we are unable to correct our balance when slipping or tripping, we fall.

Scientists define a fall as **"a sudden, unintentional change in position causing a person to land at a lower level, on the ground or some other lower object"**.

The reasons why someone falls can be numerous and often a fall is not caused by a single factor. The older you are, the more likely you are to fall and sustain injuries. This is because older people are more likely to have combinations of the risk factors that cause a fall. Older women are at a higher risk.

You might expect that the majority of falls occur during risky activities such as hill walking or on icy pavements. Most falls, however, happen at home. **About one-third of adults aged 65 and over living at home will experience a fall.** This rate is even higher in frail people in hospitals or nursing homes: in these institutions every second person falls each year.

A fall can have devastating effects on a person's quality of life - injury, limited mobility, fear of falling again, losing one's independence - just to name a few. Almost half of the people living in nursing homes experience a fall annually.

Many of the risk factors for falls can be modified and some can be removed. Here in the UK, the NHS is working in partnership with councils, primary care trusts and charities to prevent falls in older people. However, it is important that you take action yourself. You can **help prevent falls by staying fit and active** through exercising and eating a healthy diet, being aware of any safety hazards in your home, avoiding risky activities, having your eyes checked regularly and wearing the right shoes.