

Staying Steady

A guide to reduce
your risk of falling



Don't fall for it

As we get older, we have an increased risk of falling. There are simple things we can do to reduce the risk and stay independent. There are also things we can do to help us if we fall.



Read through the questions in this leaflet to find out what you can do.

Have you fallen over during the past year without knowing why?

It is important to find out why you have fallen to help you reduce your risk of falls.

- Speak to your GP or other health professional and ask for a falls assessment. This will usually include simple tests of your balance and walking, and questions about your medication, health and home environment.
- You can also refer yourself for a falls assessment by contacting **Camden Integrated Primary Care Falls Service** on 020 3317 3400.



Do you feel light-headed or dizzy when you stand up after lying or sitting down?

When you stand up your blood pressure can drop and this can make some people fall.

- If you have been lying down for a long time, sit for a couple of minutes before standing up.
- Whilst sitting, bend and straighten your ankles five times before you stand. This helps move blood to your heart and can reduce the amount your blood pressure drops when you stand.
- If you have been sitting for a long time, get up slowly and make sure you are steady before walking.
- Tell your doctor if you think any medication is making you feel dizzy.
- Ask your doctor or nurse to check your blood pressure.



Do you take sleeping tablets, heart or blood pressure tablets, water tablets, tranquillisers or antidepressant tablets?

These tablets may make you more likely to fall, because they can cause your blood pressure to drop.

- Ask your doctor or practice nurse to check your blood pressure.
- Always take medicines and tablets as prescribed.
- If new medicines or tablets cause any side-effects, always let your doctor know.
- Ask your doctor to review your medication regularly. If you are over 65 your doctor should review your medication every 12 months.
- Your local pharmacist is also a good source of information and advice.
- If you take heart spray for angina (GTN), take it while sitting down.



Do you feel less steady than you used to?

Gentle exercise at any age can help to improve your balance and strengthen your muscles.

- Be active every day. Even gentle exercise such as walking can make a difference.
- You can take part in a range of classes and activities such as seated exercise, Tai Chi, walks and dancing. Call **Camden Active** on 020 7974 4444 or visit camden.gov.uk/activehealth to find out more.
- You can ask your doctor to refer you to **Camden Integrated Primary Care Falls Service** or refer yourself by calling 020 3317 3400. It provides assessment, support and rehabilitation. Physiotherapists, occupational therapists, nurses and other health professionals can work with you in your own home. There is also a two-hour Staying Steady exercise and discussion group each week.



Do you have difficulty with your eyesight?

This can lead to slips and trips, especially in poor lighting.

- Have good lighting in all areas of your home.
- Keep rooms clear of obstacles.
- Give your eyes time to adjust to changes in light when moving between rooms.
- Turn on a light when you go to the toilet at night, or use a plug-in nightlight.
- Make sure your glasses are in good condition and are kept clean.
- Consider changing your bifocals or varifocals to single-vision lenses.
- Have your eyesight checked every year at the optician.
- If you are unable to get out to see an optician, call a home visiting service such as **Action for Blind People Low Vision Service** on 020 7391 2241 or the **Outside Clinic** on 0800 854 477.
- If your vision is particularly bad, Camden Council's **sensory needs service** can offer assessment, support and specialist equipment if you need it. Call them on 020 7974 4000.

Do you need the toilet frequently or urgently?

Problems with your bladder and bowel can be caused by:

- infection
- not drinking enough liquids
- drinking too much caffeine or alcohol
- some medications
- some medical conditions.

Rushing to the toilet can make you fall.

- Do not wait until the last minute to go to the toilet.
- Consider plug-in nightlights, especially in hallways.
- Talk to a health or social care professional about the **Bladder and Bowel Care Service**. For confidential advice, or to refer yourself, call 020 3316 8401.



Do you feel that foot problems are affecting your walking and balance?

Footwear can contribute to falls in some cases. Foot problems like calluses, bunions, corns, untrimmed toenails or ingrown toenails change the way you walk and can affect your balance.

- Wear comfortable, well-fitting, flat shoes with non-slip soles.
- Consider shoes that fasten with Velcro.
- Tie laces securely and make sure they do not trail.
- Choose trainers with a flexible sole.
- Replace worn-through slippers.
- Buy slippers that have proper backs on them, rather than slip-ons.
- See a podiatrist if you have foot problems. Your doctor can refer you to the **Camden Podiatry Service**. You can also complete a self-referral form at any health centre in Camden, or call 020 7685 5601 for more information.
- If you have difficulty cutting your own toenails, **Age UK Camden** offers a nail-cutting service. Phone 020 7794 6588 for cost and clinic locations.

Do you have any hazards in or around your home?

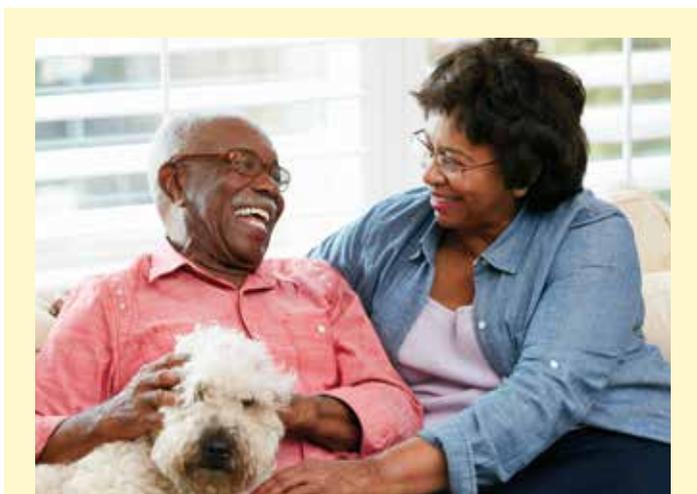
There are hazards both inside and outside the home that you can avoid:

- long or trailing clothing that you can tread on when getting out of a chair or going up and down stairs
- uneven flooring
- spillages
- poor lighting
- trailing wires
- wires underneath carpets
- loose or worn rugs and carpets
- furniture or objects which get in the way
- steps and stairs with no handrails
- loose-fitting handrails
- pets around your legs or lying in the way
- uneven and loose paving
- slippery leaves or icy pavements.

Sometimes the things you do can put you at risk of falling. Some examples include:

- reaching into cupboards
- trying to carry too many things at once
- standing on steps, stools or chairs to change light bulbs or curtains
- bending down to pick up letters or weed the garden.

- If you have difficulty with your activities of daily living, a health professional could advise on how to do things safely.
- Camden Council's **occupational therapy** service can offer you an assessment and may supply equipment at home. To contact the service phone 020 7974 4000.
- Report loose and uneven pavements to the **streets maintenance team** by calling 020 7974 4444 or online at camden.gov.uk/streetproblems
- **Origin Housing Home Improvement Agency** offers a handy person service for repairs, improvement and adaptations. Call them on 0300 323 0550.
- **WISH Plus** (Warmth, Income, Safety and Health) is a single access point for a number of helpful organisations in Camden. WISH Plus can make referrals for you to access health services, increase home safety and security, get energy advice and find out more about money, debt and benefit issues. You can contact WISH Plus on 020 7974 3012 or by visiting www.camden.gov.uk/wish



Do you have difficulty concentrating? Have you been feeling 'muddled'?

Poor concentration and memory can be caused by many different factors. These can contribute to an increased risk of falling.

- Speak to your doctor in confidence about this. There may be an underlying reason why you are having difficulty, and help is always available.
- If you are concerned about your memory getting worse, talk to your doctor about a referral to **Camden Memory Service**. The service can offer assessment, treatment, advice and support. You can also refer yourself by calling 020 3317 6584.
- Many GP practices have mental health workers who can support people with common problems such as depression and anxiety.
- To speak to the counselling service offered by **Age UK Camden** phone 020 7239 0400.



Does worrying about falling stop you doing things?

If you have had a fall or a near miss, being more cautious for a while afterwards is normal.

If your worry lasts for a long time and does not improve by itself, this can be quite distressing. You might not want to go out and do the things you enjoy because of these worries. However, over time, doing this can reduce your confidence and physical fitness and result in feelings of boredom, frustration and loneliness.

There are things you can do.

- The leaflet 'Fear of Falling: Understand It, Beat It' offers strategies to cope with the physical and emotional effects that fear and anxiety can have on you. For a free copy, contact **Camden Integrated Primary Care** on 020 3317 3400.

- Challenge some of your worrying thoughts.
Ask yourself:

"How do I know this for sure?"

"Is there another way of looking at this situation?"

"What would I tell a friend with a similar worry?"

- **British Red Cross** can offer short-term care and support following an accident or illness. They can help to rebuild your confidence and independence as you carry out your daily activities. Call them on 020 3317 3379.



Are you worried about having a fall or that you would not be able to get up after a fall?

It's important to get help promptly if you fall.

- Keep in touch with family and friends so that someone knows you are safe and well.
- **Careline Telecare** 020 7974 1491 is Camden Council's community alarm service. Join it, and you can get help by using an alarm or a falls sensor, or by pressing a pendant button. It offers a 24-hour rapid response service if you have a fall or need medical assistance.
- If you have a pendant alarm always remember to wear it. Also put it on if you get up to go to the toilet during the night.
- Ask your doctor to refer you to a physiotherapist who will help you practise getting down to the floor and back up.



Are you getting out and about less than you used to, or feeling lonelier?

People who are worried about falling tend to restrict the things they do, and this can mean less socialising and increased loneliness.

- A number of good neighbour and befriending services operate in Camden. Their volunteers befriend older people who are isolated and lonely. To find out about your nearest centre or befriending service, contact **Age UK Camden's** information line on 020 7837 3777.
- **Camden Community Connectors** can help you to find activities and meet new people. Call them on 0800 161 5716.
- There are a number of accessible transport options such as the freedom pass, plusbus, taxicard and scootability. To find out more, contact Camden **accessible transport solutions** on 020 7974 5919.
- For information and advice about social, financial, housing, health and support needs speak to **adult social care** on 020 7974 4000.

Contact list

Camden Integrated Primary Care

Home visits by physiotherapists and occupational therapists

020 3317 3400

Contact Camden

Main telephone number for Camden Council services

020 7974 4444

Adult Social Care

Initial access point for adult social services

020 7974 4000 (option 1)

Age UK Camden

Voluntary organisation providing many services in Camden

020 7837 3777

Age UK Nail Cutting Service

020 7794 6588

Bladder and Bowel Care Service

020 3316 8401

Careline Telecare

020 7974 1491

Low Vision Centre

020 7391 2241

Outside Clinic

0800 854 477

Podiatry Service

020 7685 5601

Useful websites

Falls advice and prevention
camden.gov.uk/fallsadvice

Camden Falls Service
cnwl.nhs.uk/falls

Camden Active
camden.gov.uk/activehealth

Camden Care Choices
camdencarechoices.camden.gov.uk

Age UK Camden
ageuk.org.uk/camden



For more copies of this leaflet, please contact:

Camden Integrated Primary Care
2nd floor, South Wing
St Pancras Hospital
NW1 0PE

Tel: **020 3317 3400**



You can also download this leaflet from
camden.gov.uk/fallsadvice