

## Falls - Look Out!

**Having a fall is something that concerns many older people. Every year more than 3 million people in the UK over the age of 65 will fall.**

**FACT**  
**80% of people with a visual impairment are over 60**

Many factors contribute to the risk of having a fall, but it has been shown that problems with vision are amongst the most important.

There are obvious difficulties that come with having reduced vision such as negotiating steps or uneven ground, but poor vision also affects balance and coordination and poor mobility can lead to a decline in muscle strength, all of which increase a person's risk of falling.

**FACT**  
**Older people with a visual impairment have double the risk of falling**



Falls can have devastating consequences. However it isn't just the fall itself but the fear of falling which can have a huge impact on confidence, independence and mobility.

## What can I do?

Much can be done to help reduce the risks of people falling and making sure that you have your vision checked is an important step. Having regular eye tests means that any developing eye condition will be identified and treated at an early stage.

### Get an eye sight test

An eye test will also identify whether you need glasses or whether the glasses you have are the correct strength. Eye tests are free in Scotland and you should attend your local optometrist every year if you are over 60 and more regularly if you have an eye condition.

#### **ACTION**

**Have an eye test and make sure you are wearing glasses that are right for your eyesight**



If you wear glasses, make sure they are the correct strength and clean. It helps you see! For those of you who wear bifocals or varifocals, you should talk to your optometrist if you are worried about falling as there is evidence to suggest that these types of glasses may increase the risk of falling on stairs.

### Improve your lighting and de-clutter

Simple changes can make a difference. Over 50% of falls happen in the home so make sure pathways are clutter free and any rugs are removed. Ensure that you have good lighting, especially in areas such as halls, stairs, kitchens and bathrooms.

#### **ACTION**

**Remember that a 60 year old needs three times as much light as a 20 year old!**

## Use bright, bold colours

For many people the use of good colour contrast makes things easier to see. Try to keep patterns to a minimum and use bright and bold colours. Stair rails and grab rails can help by providing a bit of stability but make sure they contrast with the wall and floor colour.



**ACTION**  
Use bold and bright colours to highlight areas of your home

## Keep moving

Exercise is a very important factor to retaining strength and balance especially as we get older. If you don't use it you lose it! If you are finding it difficult, start off with some armchair exercises and graduate to walking or even an exercise class.

**ACTION**  
Keep moving!  
Do what you  
can



Once you have had one fall, you are more likely to have another one. If you are falling, it is very important that you tell someone and talk to your GP as they will be able to check several things such as your blood pressure and medications which may reduce your risk of further falls.

Don't forget to tell them if you have problems with your vision too.

**ACTION**  
**Tell your GP if you**  
**have fallen even if**  
**you did not injure**  
**yourself.**

Visibility provides advice, information and services to people with a visual impairment and is working closely with health and social care teams to reduce the risk of falls.

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**[www.visibility.org.uk](http://www.visibility.org.uk)**



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