
Falls – services for older people

Summary

- Falls are a major cause of injury for older people.
 - You can lower your risk of falls by improving safety in and around your home and managing your health.
 - Contact your local council for information about the Commonwealth Home Support Program, which can help install support rails, ramps and other safety aids in your home, or help with basic home maintenance.
 - Consider installing a personal alarm. Personal alert systems notify emergency services and caregivers of an accident, such as a fall. While such systems won't stop you from falling, they can provide prompt response and assistance should you fall. Contact your local council for further information.
 - If you live in a residential aged care home, you may wish to find out what programs they have in place to help prevent or lower the risk of falls.
-

Falls are a major cause of injury for older people.

It is estimated that at least one in three people aged 65 years or over fall one or more times a year. Older people are almost 12 times more likely to have a fall than a motor vehicle or pedestrian accident.

Most falls happen in and around the home, but falls can also happen in residential aged care homes and hospitals.

You can prevent or lower your risk of falls by following some simple safety measures and by managing your health.

Various services are available to help you prevent falls, or to provide help if you have a fall.

Falls prevention

Falls can be prevented. Some risk factors for falls are easy to manage and, when falls occur, the severity of injuries can be reduced. Taking safety measures around your home, or in hospital, and looking after your health and physical wellbeing can make a big difference.

If you feel unsteady or have a fall, even one that does not cause an injury, make an appointment to discuss it with your doctor.

Find information on [preventing falls at home](#).

Services to help you minimise the risk of falling

There are various services that can help people lower the risk of falls and provide assistance, should a fall happen.

Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP)

The CHSP (formerly known as the **Commonwealth Home and Community Care Program**, or HACC) is Victoria's main program for providing in-home help to frail older people, younger people with disabilities and carers.

The program provides a wide range of services including specific help to minimise your risk of falling, such as help with **home maintenance** (general repairs and house and yard upkeep to reduce trip hazards) and **home modification** (such as installing safety aids such as alarms, ramps and support rails).

To be eligible for CHSP, you must be aged 65 years or over (50 years or over for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people) or have a disability

Before you can receive CHSP home support services, you will have a basic assessment to work out what sort of help and how much you need, and what it might cost. What you pay depends on your income and the type and number of services you want.

For information on the CHSP or agencies in your area, contact **My Aged Care** on 1800 200 422 (free call) or your local council.

Falls prevention in residential aged care homes

More than half of all people living in residential aged care have at least one fall each year. Injuries from falls are common, with up to a half of these falls causing serious injuries such as fractures.

However, falls can be reduced for people living in aged care homes by identifying your individual risk factors and developing a care plan to address the risk factors.

Find out what actions or falls prevention programs the staff and management at your residential aged care home have put in place to reduce falls, and what this involves. Ask them to develop a care plan for you to help reduce your risk of falling.

Falls prevention in hospital

During a hospital stay, you may be more unsteady on your feet because of your illness or surgery, or because you are unfamiliar with your hospital environment or taking new medication.

Injuries from falls can result in a longer hospital stay. The BHC page **[Preventing falls in hospital](#)** provides further information about how to reduce the risk of having a fall while you are in hospital.

Services to help you if you have a fall

Emergency services

If you have had a fall and you are able to reach a telephone, **[call triple zero](#)** (000) for an ambulance.

Personal alert systems

You may want to consider installing a personal alert system in your home for prompt assistance if you fall. Personal alert systems notify emergency services and caregivers of an accident, such as a fall.

Personal alert systems or services can provide you with confidence to live in your own home, and offer you and your family greater peace of mind.

[Personal Alert Victoria \(PAV\)](#) is a personal monitoring service that responds to calls for assistance 24 hours a day. To be eligible for PAV you must be assessed by a designated PAV assessment organisation.

If you are not eligible for PAV, there are a lot of alternatives available for personal alert systems, refer to **[Alternatives to PAV](#)**.

Falls and mobility clinics

Falls and mobility clinics (or falls and balance clinics) are specialist clinics for people who are having near-falls or falls, particularly where the cause is not known.

These clinics provide detailed assessments of your balance and mobility. Assessments are carried out by a multidisciplinary team, which may include a physiotherapist, occupational therapist, rehabilitation physician or geriatrician. The aim of the assessment is to:

- work out what is causing you to fall
- refer you to medical or allied health professionals for therapy, treatment or ongoing case management
- help you establish a management plan that aims to prevent you having falls in the future

Your management plan might include:

- referrals to physiotherapists or exercise groups
- home safety information and advice
- medication management advice
- counselling.

You will need a referral from your doctor to attend a falls and mobility clinic.

Where to get help

- Your **GP**, about your fall, safe use of medications and for referral to a Falls and Mobility Clinic
- **My Aged Care**, call 1800 200 422
- Personal Alert Victoria
- your doctor or **pharmacist**, about the safe use of medications
- an **occupational therapist**, about making your home environment safer
- a **physiotherapist**, about suitable exercise programs and walking aids
- an **optometrist**, about checking your eyesight
- a **podiatrist** about footcare and footwear
- a **dietitian**, or community nurse about eating a healthy diet
- local council, about help with personal care, home maintenance, community hazards
- community health organisations, about managing specific chronic health conditions
- Commonwealth Respite Carelink Centres Tel. 1800 052 222
- **Carers Australia** Tel. 1800 242 636
- **Seniors Information Victoria** Tel. 1300 13 50 90
- Independent Living Centre Victoria Tel. (03) 9362 6111

This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by:

Department of Health and Human Services

Content on this website is provided for information purposes only. Information about a therapy, service, product or treatment does not in any way endorse or support such therapy, service, product or treatment and is not intended to replace advice from your doctor or other registered health professional. The information and materials contained on this website are not intended to constitute a comprehensive guide concerning all aspects of the therapy, product or treatment described on the website. All users are urged to always seek advice from a registered health care professional for diagnosis and answers to their medical questions and to ascertain whether the particular therapy, service, product or treatment described on the website is suitable in their circumstances. The State of Victoria and the Department of Health & Human Services shall not bear any liability for reliance by any user on the materials contained on this website.

For the latest updates and more information, visit www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

Copyright © 1999/2020 State of Victoria. Reproduced from the Better Health Channel (www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au) at no cost with permission of the Victorian Minister for Health. Unauthorised reproduction and other uses comprised in the copyright are prohibited without permission.