

Standing Stronger Together Tūkaha Tātou



Hato Hone
St John





Falls are the most common cause of injury in older people. A fall can happen anywhere and have serious consequences – not just for the older adult, but also for friends, whānau, and family caring for them. Falling over is not an inevitable part of the ageing process, and many falls are preventable.

This resource has been co-designed by Hato Hone St John (HHStJ), ACC, Osteoporosis NZ and Wellington Free Ambulance (WFA) with the aim of putting all the resources together for easy access and understanding to keep you living independently at home for longer.

Prevention

Tiakitanga

There are plenty of ways to keep yourself safe and strong. Below are some of the options that may be available to you to prevent falls and fragility fractures.

Know Your Bones™

If you have broken a bone following a simple trip, slip or fall since you turned 50, you are twice as likely to break another bone in the future. For both men and women, awareness of fracture risk and early diagnosis are key. Visit www.osteoporosis.org.nz and take the Know your Bones™ Test and show your personalised results to your healthcare provider.

Community strength and balance classes

Designed to be a fun and social way to improve your confidence and help you stay steady on your feet. A range of class types available nationwide, or you can join from home with online classes.

Our people at HHStJ and WFA can refer you to classes, or you can visit www.livestronger.org.nz to find a class near you.

Nymbbl App

Nymbbl is a free balance training app you can use in the comfort of your own home. Designed for older adults (50yr+), use it for 10 minutes a day to help improve your balance and reduce your risk of falls. Scan the QR code on page 11 or visit your phone or tablet's App store and search Nymbbl to get started.

Maintaining vision and hearing

Getting your vision and hearing checked and wearing your glasses or hearing aids helps you stay safer and reduces the risk of falls.

Remember your medication

Taking your medication as prescribed helps control any health problems, and if you are prescribed Vitamin D, these are especially good for your bones. It is also a good idea to have a regular medication review, to ensure that you are on the right medication at the right doses.

Keep up your food and fluids

Eating well can help you maintain your strength, balance, and bone density, reducing the chance of having a fall and breaking a bone. It will also support your immune system and prevent infections. Staying hydrated supports your blood pressure and helps keep you alert.



Home safety

Te Haumarū i te Kainga

Clutter and basic household items can cause a slip or trip, so it's important to be aware of what these are and how you can minimise the risk.

Item	Issue	Action
Rugs	Do they move or slip when you walk over them?	Anchor them in place with anti-slip mats.
	Are they frayed, rolled at the corners, wrinkled or lumpy?	Repair, donate or replace them.
Power cords	Heaters or extension cords can be across your floor.	Try to run cords out of your walking path. Highlight them with bright tape or cover them with special cord protectors.
Pets	You don't see them, or they move quickly.	Pause before moving. Look to see where your pet is before you walk.
Wet floors	Slippery surface.	Always use a non-slip bathmat in showers or the bath.
Dropped items	Losing balance by bending too far forward.	If you drop items such as medication or the remote, have a pick-up stick to help you retrieve them.
Walking/mobility aids	Can become a hazard when not used correctly.	Use when required or store them out of your path when not required.
Footwear	Can cause slips and trips.	Ensure footwear is worn correctly and socks/slippers have non-slip soles.

What else can you do in the home? He aha anō ngā mahi i te kainga?

Lighting

Lighting is one of the easiest and most effective ways to ‘fall-proof’ your home.

- › Use area-lamps to target areas that your ceiling lights don’t reach.
- › Use nightlights if you get up often in the night.
- › Install light switches at the top and bottom of stairs.
- › Install automatic security lights (front and back doors, along the path to the house).

Supports

Sometimes extra support can make a big difference. If you struggle to get on or off the toilet, in and out of the bath or shower or feel unsteady or uncomfortable when showering, additional supports may make you feel and be safer.

Consider the use of:

- › Handrails around the bathroom
- › A bath-seat so you can shower sitting down
- › A handheld showerhead.

If you use walking aids, be sure to use one that is suitable for your height and mobility.

In other parts of the house like the kitchen, you may want to consider putting things that you use everyday within easy reach to prevent bending over and overreaching which can make you feel dizzy and unsteady. A sturdy and safe step ladder or a pick-up stick may also be of use for hard-to-reach items.

Keep your walkways clear and free from clutter and take your time.

Personal considerations

If you are taking medications to lower your blood pressure or to help you sleep, this can make you more likely to fall if you rush.

If you have been lying down, before you stand up, always sit for a minute or two first to let your blood pressure adjust or wake up properly to reduce your risk of falling.

If you have issues with incontinence, talk to your doctor or nurse. Rushing to get up and go to the toilet with urgency can contribute to the risk of falling.

Make sure that your shoes and slippers fit well and securely and have non-slip soles. Avoid walking around in socks or stockings.

What to do if you fall

Me aha mēnā ka taka koe

Remain calm. Having an unexpected slip, trip or fall can be unsettling. Take a moment to orient yourself to your surroundings and take a few controlled breaths to calm yourself.

Immediate assessment and first aid

Check for any bleeding and apply pressure to any wounds where blood is pouring or spurting out. If you are unable to stop the bleeding quickly, push your medical alarm or call for emergency medical assistance.

When to seek urgent medical help

Push your medical alarm or call for emergency medical assistance on 111 immediately if you have any of the following:

- Severe bleeding not controlled by direct pressure
- Dizziness, slurred speech, confusion or blurred vision
- Severe pain
- Altered sensation or unable to move your limbs.

It is normal to have some pain immediately after a fall but you should call for urgent assistance if you have any severe pain or pain in your head or neck, especially if it is there when you are not moving. You should also be seen by a medical professional if you have fallen more than once in 24hrs.

Post-fall injury check

If you think you have no serious injuries, consider calling a relative, friend or neighbour to help you get up.

Trying to get up on your own if you are wobbly can worsen an injury or cause another fall.

If you can safely do so – roll onto your side, then try to sit up. If you can, try to get into a more comfortable position, such as onto carpet or closer to sturdy furniture for support. If you are uninjured and feel strong enough, you can then try to push yourself up using the bed or couch to support you.

Once you are in a safe, comfortable place, perform a careful, head-to-toe self-assessment looking for any minor bleeding, bruising or pain.

Call a healthcare provider or seek medical advice if you find any new injury or pain that does not settle.

Try to get a same-day check-up if you have any skin tears as these can cause infection if not cleaned and dressed well. You may be able to get this done at a pharmacy if you cannot get an appointment to see your nurse.

Be aware that some injuries may not be obvious for a few hours or even a few days. Be sure to seek medical advice if you are unsure.

Next steps

When you feel up to it, try to stand up slowly. If you need to wait until people are there to help you, that is ok and much safer than trying to stand on your own if you are sore or unsteady.

Before walking – test your balance. See if you feel unsteady or have difficulty with your balance.

Once you are upright and steady, if you feel safe, you can try walking – observe if your gait is different or if it is difficult to walk normally.

If you remain unsteady or your gait is different (how you walk), you will need to seek medical attention.

If you have any concerns about your balance or are worried about falling again, a medical evaluation is a good idea.

What to expect when you call an ambulance

He aha ka tūmanakohia i te waea Waka Manaaki

If you have called 111, you will be asked to choose police, fire or ambulance – ask for ambulance.

The next person you speak to will ask you lots of questions, these are to help us understand what is wrong and quickly determine what type of help you may need.

If you have a medical condition or injury that may cause a threat to your life, the nearest ambulance will usually be dispatched as soon as it is available.

Sometimes you will get a call back from a paramedic or a nurse. They will ask you more questions to see if there is any advice or support that they can give you over the phone. If there are no serious injuries, they may offer to reach out to your relatives or neighbours if any of them are in a position to help you get up.

It is good to have a plan with your family and friends on who would be happy to help you if you fall.

What is available for me? Ko ngā tautoko wātea mōku?

As mentioned earlier our people at HHStJ and WFA can refer you to community (or online) Strength and Balance classes you can attend, or you can visit www.livestronger.org.nz to find out more.

With your permission, your healthcare provider or the paramedics can organise a referral for you to one of the strength and balance classes.

They may also suggest a needs assessment be completed for you. This involves looking at what supports such as chairs, ramps and rails you may need to help you stay safer in your home for longer.

If you have wounds that need to be dressed, the local district nursing service may be able to do these for you, check with your healthcare provider to see if this is an option for you.

There may be local community groups that offer short or longer-term support for people who still live in their own homes. This can include help with getting groceries, housework and gardening. Check in with your medical centre or local community papers for more information.

For more information



www.livestronger.org.nz



www.osteoporosis.org.nz



www.knowyourbones.org.nz



www.ilsnz.org

Scan the QR code to find a strength and balance class



Scan a QR code below to download the Nymbi app



Nymbi app download for Android devices



Nymbi app download for Apple devices



Scan the QR code for more information about the Nymbi app.





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