



St Margaret's
Hospice Care

Helping to prevent falls

Information booklet



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Introduction

Home can be one of the most precious of places. Unfortunately it can be one of the most dangerous. Many people who fall do so in their home. This information leaflet gives some general home safety tips.

If you recognise any risks in your home - try to act on them! Any effort to correct them will be small compared to the possible consequences if you should fall and injure yourself. The action you take may even prevent other people from having an accident too.

You may need help organising some of the suggestions in this leaflet. Your GP, District Nurse, Physiotherapist or Nurse Specialist may be able to refer you to an Occupational Therapist in your area. An Occupational Therapist (OT) will offer further advice, aid or help with alterations.

Making outside safer

Possible Risks	Possible Solutions
Slippery paths	Keep garden paths in as good a condition as possible and clear of leaves and moss. Keep rock salt to use when it's icy.
Difficulty seeing the path and steps	Fit an outside security light. Paint a white edge around the steps so that they are more visible.
Difficulty climbing the steps	Fit a strong grab-rail - ask your OT about this.
Difficulty bending down to reach the milk or papers	Ask the milkman to place the bottles on a wall or ledge to avoid you having to bend. Get a long handled milk bottle holder. Get a letter cage fitted behind your letter box to catch the post.

Avoiding problems in the kitchen

Possible Risks	Possible Solutions
Unable to reach kitchen items	Arrange your kitchen so the most frequently used items are within easy reach. Do not climb - ask someone to help you and never use a chair or stool.
Lifting heavy objects	Keep heavy items as near to waist height as possible and use work surfaces to move them from one place to another. Do not carry items whilst using a walking aid - ask your OT for advice about a specialised kitchen trolley.
Unable to stand for too long	If there is no room for a table in the kitchen then consider using a higher stool, or perching stool, which will allow you to sit while carrying out tasks.
Slippery floors	Use a long handled mop to clean up spills immediately.

Avoiding risks in the living room

Possible Risks	Possible Solutions
Favourite chair is too low and difficult to get out of easily	Ask about ways to make your chair higher. High chairs with arm rests are easier to get in and out of. Use arms of the chair for support not your walking aid.
Trailing telephone or electric cables which may trip you up	Tape cables down or tuck them away behind furniture. Use a coiled flex or a short flex that doesn't hang down.
Cluttered rooms and walkways	Clear away items from rooms and passages that you no longer need. Ask someone to help you move furniture to give you a clear path through the rooms. Check that low tables or foot stools are not in your way.

In the bedroom

Possible Risks	Possible Solutions
Bed moves around when you sit on it	Ask someone to remove the castors to make it stable but be careful that this doesn't make it too low.
Bed too low to get out of easily	Ask about ways to make your bed higher.
Stretching to reach the bedside light	Move a lamp nearer. Fit an easy to use switch on the bedside light. Have a pull cord for your main bedroom light fitted over your bed. Consider using a night light in the bedroom.
Getting up too quickly	Take your time in the morning. First sit up and then rest for a moment to give your sense of balance a chance to adjust before you stand up. If you use a walking aid, make sure you can reach it from your bed.
Stretching to hang up clothes	Lower rails and hooks. Use a chair to put your clothes on.
Slippery bed covers	Replace slippery bed covers with non slip, to avoid sliding off the bed.
Difficult to get in and out of bed	Ask about specialised equipment that may help.

On the stairs

Possible Risks	Possible Solutions
Tripping over things left on the stairs	Do not leave anything on the stairs. Make an area on a table near the stairs where you can put items which need to go upstairs. Secure loose carpet edges with double sided carpet tape.
Not having a good enough grip	Have an extra banister rail so that you have something to hold onto on both sides - ask for advice.
A dimly lit stairway	Have brighter light bulbs in your hall and landing. Use energy efficient light bulbs and leave them on overnight.
Difficulty seeing the edge of the stairs	Ask somebody to secure brightly coloured, non-slip tape on the edge of each step.
Not being able to turn the lights on or off from upstairs	Have a two way light switch fitted to ensure that you never have to walk up or down the stairs in the dark.
Need to use a walking aid	Make sure there is one at the top and bottom of the staircase and don't carry it while climbing the stairs.

In the bathroom and toilet

Possible Risks	Possible Solutions
Difficulty getting in or out of the bath	Ask about having grab rails fitted and whether any bathing equipment would make it easier to use the bath.
Loose mats	Remove or ask someone to fix down mats in the bathroom.
Slippery bath or shower	Use a non-slip bath or shower mat. Ask about seats which can be used in the shower. Try not to drip or spray water as this can make surfaces slippery.
Stretching to reach the soap or towels etc	Arrange things you need near you before you get into the bath or shower. Move near to the things, do not stretch.
Difficulty getting on or off the toilet as it is too low	Your toilet seat can be raised and rails can be fitted to assist you. Ask about other equipment that could be provided to make this easier.
Using the edge of the sink or towel rails to help get off the toilet	Sinks and towel rails are not designed to take your weight and may give way - a well placed grab rail would be much safer. If you use a walking frame and your toilet is too small, it is safer to leave it outside and use fitted rails to hold onto - ask about grab rails or toilet frames.

Other risks and tips

Possible Risks	Possible Solutions
Not being able to get help	<p>Fit a telephone extension upstairs or have a mobile phone handy. Make sure you can reach your telephone from the floor. Get a pendant alarm as it will be with you wherever you fall, even in the garden or in the bathroom. Ask your GP for more information.</p>
No one can get in to help you	<p>Make sure someone you trust has a key to get in should you need them and consider having a key safe fitted.</p> <p>Let other people know who to contact if you need help.</p> <p>Make sure the bathroom door lock can be opened from the outside or remove the lock altogether.</p>
Dimly lit rooms	<p>Use brighter light bulbs where possible so that no hazards are hidden in dark areas.</p> <p>At night consider using long life energy efficient bulbs along your route to the bathroom - although they cost a bit more to buy, they last longer and they can be left on all night at an inexpensive rate.</p>
Uneven or loose carpet/rugs	<p>Replace worn carpets.</p> <p>Remove rugs.</p> <p>Nail or tape down any loose or frayed edges.</p>
Climbing on chairs or furniture to reach things	<p>Ask someone to get it for you.</p> <p>Never pull on furniture as it may fall on you.</p>
Low electric sockets	<p>Consider having sockets repositioned at a higher level or use socket extensions.</p> <p>Use a long handled appliance such as an 'Easy Reach' to turn low or high switches on.</p>

Trailing clothes	<p>Make sure clothing and nightwear is short enough to avoid tripping.</p> <p>Sit down rather than stand when pulling clothes over your head or legs to dress.</p>
Unsuitable footwear	<p>Wear rubber soled shoes rather than leather or foam soles.</p> <p>Wear sturdy, supportive shoes with a flat or sensible heel.</p> <p>Wear well fitting slippers that fully enclose the foot.</p> <p>Avoid walking around the house without wearing shoes or slippers.</p>

Summary tips for all areas of your home

- Keep all doorways clear to avoid tripping and to enable them to open to their full extent
- Keep areas as clutter free as possible
- Avoid carrying anything awkward or too heavy. Consider speaking to your GP, District Nurse, Physiotherapist or Nurse Specialist about equipment that may help
- Good lighting is essential to safety. Consider using energy efficient light bulbs and light bulbs with a higher wattage
- Ensure all cables are fitted securely to the wall. Use an extension lead rather than stretch a cable
- If you don't want to remove them, secure rugs, mats and loose carpets down with specialised double sided carpet tape
- If you use furniture to support yourself, make sure it is substantial and secure. Remove castors to make it more stable
- Avoid excessive reaching and bending wherever possible. Use a 'helping hand' to pick items off the floor, close the curtains, load and unload the washing machine, for example
- Make sure you can reach your telephone if you do have a fall. Consider getting a pendant alarm and/or mobile phone that is with you at all times
- If you use a walking aid, make sure it is in good condition. Remember to check the rubber tips for wear and tear

Other sources of information

Age UK

Provides advice and information on issues affecting personal and social well-being.

Tel: **01823 345613**

www.ageuk.org.uk/somerset

Community alarms/pendant alarms

Are a 24-hour emergency call system for older people and people with disabilities who live at home.

Community Occupational Therapists

Will assess your needs and give advice on equipment and alterations such as ramps, handrails and other aids and adaptations.

Disability Resource Centres

Offer a comprehensive information service for people with disabilities and their carers.

Sight Concern

Provides advice and information, equipment and mobility aids. Also provides social activities, home visits, information newsletter, talking books and newspapers, special education services and benefits advice.

Social Services

Provide advice about social and community care issues and can put you in touch with local helping and caring organisations.

Notes

St Margaret's Hospice Care Taunton Hospice,

Heron Drive, Bishops Hull, Taunton, TA1 5HA

 01823 333822

St Margaret's Hospice Care Yeovil Hospice,

Little Tarrat Lane, Yeovil, BA20 2HU

 01935 709480

 info@st-margarets-hospice.org.uk

St Margaret's Hospice Care is committed to taking your privacy seriously and protecting your personal information. If you want to know more about how we use your data go on the 'privacy statement' on our website or ask for a copy of this information via info@st-margarets-hospice.org.uk

Please note all incoming and outgoing calls may be recorded for training and quality purposes.

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