



## Preventing Falls

Loss of balance and falling are common problems for people living with Parkinson's.

These problems develop over time as the condition progresses. Falls carry a significant risk of physical injury and hospitalisation.

The fear of falling and associated loss of confidence can be as disabling as the actual falling. Being aware of the causes of falls can reduce the risk of falling.

The causes include:

- 💡 Stiff and rigid muscles
- 💡 Slowed movement
- 💡 A shuffling gait and muscle fatigue
- 💡 Depression
- 💡 Sleep disturbance & fatigue
- 💡 Side effects of medications
- 💡 Ill-fitting clothing
- 💡 Alcohol consumption
- 💡 Postural instability & stooped posture
- 💡 Freezing
- 💡 Impaired vision
- 💡 Anxiety
- 💡 Urinary urgency
- 💡 Inappropriate footwear
- 💡 Dressing gown cords
- 💡 Poor lighting

Here are some tips on preventing falls:

### Improve home safety

- 💡 Reduce clutter to eliminate trip hazards
- 💡 Create unobstructed walkways throughout the home
- 💡 Ensure good overhead lighting, particularly at steps
- 💡 Consider installing handrails at steps and grab rails in bathrooms

### Improve walking safety

- 💡 Maintain a regular exercise program to improve muscle strength and balance
- 💡 Wear supportive footwear
- 💡 Use music to walk to a beat
- 💡 Focus on taking long strides and swinging arms
- 💡 Focus attention when turning and do so slowly
- 💡 Use walking aids if prescribed.
- 💡 Take care when wearing multifocal glasses, especially on stairs

### What to do if a fall occurs

- 💡 Remain calm
- 💡 Do not attempt to move quickly
- 💡 Rather than carers and family members trying to lift a person who has fallen, assist the person to help themselves e.g. by bringing a chair so they can use it to lift themselves up.
- 💡 If unable to get up with minimal assistance call an ambulance.

**Do you have questions about falls or other aspects of Parkinson's?**  
Make a free call to the Parkinson's NSW InfoLine: 1800 644 189