

The home environment

Occupational therapists can complete home assessments to identify fall risks and provide fall prevention strategies to reduce your fear of falling.

You may require home modifications, such as bathroom rails or other equipment, to improve your safety and independence.

Keep your home environment safe by removing clutter and hazards.

Remove rugs and mats to decrease the risk of falls.

Consider the use of sensor lights to assist you with visibility at night.

Can you modify tasks to improve your independence and confidence, such as sitting to get dressed, using a tray mobile to carry hot drinks, etc?

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

Managing fear and anxiety

- You may feel more anxious or panicky when you are walking. You may find yourself breathing faster than normal. Remember to control and slow your breathing.
- Challenge your thoughts about walking and remember times when your walking has been strong.
- Try relaxation strategies to help manage fear or anxiety, such as deep breathing exercises or visualisation (imagine a relaxing place).
- Talk to others and develop a support network.
- Learn more about anxiety, fear of falling and fall prevention strategies.
- Maintain a healthy diet, get enough sleep and avoid excessive consumption of alcohol.
- Review your medications with your GP.

For further assistance contact:

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Fear of falling

Patient information

SCGOPHCG 1862 12 21



This brochure is a guide to helping you understand what fear of falling is, how you identify it and what an occupational therapist can do to assist.

What is fear of falling?

Fear of falling is an ongoing and constant sense of worry about falling that limits your participation in activity.

It can occur more often as people age.

You may or may not have previously fallen.

Why is it important to understand?

Being fearful of falling is quite normal. But a more ongoing, lasting fear of falling can cause problems and prevent us from enjoying life to the full.

Fear of falling can lead to reduced involvement in your daily activities such as cooking, cleaning, shopping or going outside. This results in decreased physical activity, leading to reduced strength and mobility, which can increase your risk of falling.

What does it feel like?

- Scared to walk
- Poor balance or swaying when walking
- Holding onto furniture to move around
- A decrease in step length
- Walking with your hands in front of you
- Feeling anxious or afraid of falling
- Fearing the worst, such as 'I will not be able to get up if I fall'
- Playing recent falls over in your mind
- You may not want to go out or participate in social events
- Depressed mood



What can occupational therapy do for you?

Occupational therapists are experienced practitioners who assist patients to continue participating in their daily activities as independently and safely as possible.

We aim to:

- Assist you to stay active and independent
- Help keep you safe at home and avoid falls
- Provide strategies for managing fear and anxiety-related falls

Staying active and independent

Maintain your daily routines and continue to participate in tasks such as cooking and shopping as much as possible to maintain your independence.

Set small goals to restore confidence.

Remember for safe mobility, take your time and don't rush.

Use a wide stance when standing to increase your balance.

Create a fall action plan – what would you do if you did have a fall?

Avoid wearing only socks, as these can cause you to slip.

Consider wearing well-fitting rubber-soled shoes.