

Other things you can do

Balance and strength exercise programs designed by a physiotherapist are also effective in reducing falls. Contact your local community health centre for class details.

Other forms of exercise, such as walking and water aerobics, will help you to stay fit and well but have not been shown by research to reduce your risk of falling.

Also:

- Ask your GP for a bone density check for osteoporosis
- Have your vision checked regularly and keep your glass clean
- Make your home safer, inside and out, by removing trip and slip hazards and installing grab rails
- Install a night-light beside your bed and in your hallway
- Keep a list of emergency phone numbers next to your telephone
- Wear flat-heeled, securely-fastened shoes with non-slip soles

Local contact:

Produced with support from Esso and Mobil

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MONASH
UNIVERSITY
Accident Research Centre

Data supplied by
Victorian Injury Surveillance
and Applied Research (VISAR)

Photos courtesy of the City of Melbourne
and the Melbourne City Baths

For more information
and copies of the brochure contact
Monash University Accident Centre (VISAR)
visar.enquire@general.monash.edu.au
or phone (03) 9905 1805

FACTS ON FALL INJURIES



SENIORS



What's the problem?

Falls are a major cause of injury for older people.

In Victoria each year, falls cause at least 250 deaths, 12,000 hospital admissions and 12,000 emergency department visits in people aged 65 years and over. People aged over 70 are at greater risk.

Research shows that:

- fractured bones are the most common injury resulting from falls
- the hip (neck of femur) is the most commonly fractured bone
- most falls happen at home
- falls become more common with increasing age

The bad news is that half of all older adults hospitalised with hip fractures do not return home or live independently after their injuries.

The good news is that most falls can be prevented.

By taking action to reduce your risk of falls you can see to it that fall injuries don't interfere with your enjoyment of life and threaten your independence.

Risk factors for falls

Here are some factors that may increase your chance of falling.

Do any apply to you?

- I have fallen in the past 12 months
- I take three or more medications
- I take anxiety or sleeping tablets
- I have osteoporosis
- My balance is not very good
- I suffer from dizziness
- I am not very active
- I have a fear of falling
- My health has got worse recently
- I have trouble remembering things

If you ticked any of these boxes speak to your doctor or community health centre about ways to reduce your chance of falling. If you are aged 75 years or older ask your doctor for a special extended health assessment, which will include a falls risk check. The cost is covered by Medicare.

What can you do?

Try Tai Chi

Regular exercise strong on balance training is the best way to reduce your risk of falls. Research shows that Tai Chi is one of the best forms of exercise for this purpose.

Tai Chi reduced the risk of falls by nearly 50% in a group of older people who attended classes to learn the movements for 15 weeks and then practised at home. Tai Chi will also lower your blood pressure, improve your flexibility and keep you mind alert.



Phone VicFit (Freecall 1800 638 594) or your local council or community health service for information on classes near you.