



## Being an active partner in your care

[www.veteransmates.net.au](http://www.veteransmates.net.au)



# UNSTEADY ON YOUR FEET? TALK TO YOUR GP

Being unsteady on your feet can be worrying, particularly if you have fallen in the past. You might feel that there is nothing that can be done to help and that it's just one of those things that happen as you get older. By talking to your GP and working through things together, small changes can be made to help keep you steady on your feet and reduce your chance of having a fall.

Even if you have never fallen, there are things you can do to keep steady on your feet, stay fit and active, get out and about, and be independent. This brochure gives you some tips on what you can do to keep steady on your feet and which health professionals can help.

## Have you had your medicines checked lately?

All medicines can have side effects. Some side effects, such as feeling dizzy or unsteady on your feet, might make you more prone to a fall. Taking several medicines or taking certain types of medicines (such as sleeping tablets, antidepressant medicines or an opioid medicine for pain) can increase your chance of falling.

## Tips

- Talk to your GP if you feel dizzy, unsteady on your feet or sleepy during the day.
- Ask your GP about potential side effects of your medicines.
- Ask your GP about having a Home Medicines Review. In this free service a pharmacist comes to your home to review your medicines with you. Together with your pharmacist and GP, you can work out if any of your medicines might need a change.

## ? Are you keeping active each day?

---

Even a small amount of physical activity each day improves your muscle strength and balance which can help you avoid falling.

### ✓ Tips

- Aim to be active for at least 30 minutes on most days of the week.
- Consider group exercise programs that include balance and muscle strengthening.
- If you are unsure of what exercises to do or where to access them, ask your GP. They might refer you to a physiotherapist or exercise physiologist who can work out exercises to best suit you.
- Suitable programs, such as Tai Chi, might be available through your local community centre.



## ? Have you had your eyesight checked recently?

---

Changes in your eyesight as you get older can affect how well you see. Wearing the correct glasses and making sure your eyes are as healthy as possible, can help you to move around safely.

### ✓ Tips

- Have your eyesight checked at least once every two years. If you notice any changes in your vision, have it checked out sooner. DVA Gold and White Card holders might be eligible to receive funded optical services and glasses.
- Keep your glasses clean and wear the correct glasses to suit your activity. For example, wear distance glasses for walking around and reading glasses for reading.
- Take care if using eye drops or eye ointment as these can affect your vision.
- Be extra careful on steps if you wear multifocal or bifocal lenses as these can distort your perception of depth.

## ? Is your footwear suitable and comfortable?

As you get older you might notice some changes in your feet which can affect how you walk. Take care of your feet and choose footwear that makes walking safe and comfortable.

### ✓ Tips

- Wear comfortable, firm-fitting, flat shoes with low broad heels and soles that don't slip, but are not too thick or gripping (see picture).
- A podiatrist can help you to choose suitable shoes and tell you where you can buy them.
- Talk to your GP if you notice any changes in your feet, such as blisters, sores, swelling, pain, numbness or tingling.
- Don't walk around in socks or poorly fitted slippers – they can be very slippery.



## ? Could things around your home or garden cause you to slip, trip or fall?

Many things around the home and garden can cause you to slip, trip or fall: stairs without railings, poor lighting, carpet edges, loose rugs, garden hoses and other gardening equipment.

### ✓ Tips

- Make sure your home and outside areas are well lit. Install night lights or turn on lights when getting up at night.
- Remove potential tripping hazards.
- Keep the things you use every day within easy reach. Don't climb up on ladders, chairs or kitchen benches.
- Remove rugs or mats or make sure they have non-slip backing.
- Use a non-slip mat in bathrooms and have a hand rail or a seat in the shower or bath.
- Use your walking aid if you have one and make sure you have enough space to use it safely.
- If you have a pet, check whether they are lying nearby before you move.
- Talk to your GP about whether you might be eligible for DVA funded services, appliances and modifications for making your home safer.
- For further tips see the 'Don't fall for it. Falls can be prevented!' booklet at: [www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/phd-pub-injury-dontfall-cnt.htm](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/phd-pub-injury-dontfall-cnt.htm)

## ? Do you have a plan for getting help if you fall over?

It is a good idea to be prepared for what you would do if you fell, especially if you live on your own. Who would you contact if you fell? Do you have access to a phone or alert system? Do you know how to get up safely from the floor?

### ✓ Tips

- Make daily contact with someone who can arrange help if you need it. It might be a daily phone call from a relative, friend, neighbour or a Red Cross volunteer from the national Telecross service at: [www.redcross.org.au/telecross](http://www.redcross.org.au/telecross)
- A personal alarm, where you can press a button on a pendant or a wristband to alert a key contact person, might be useful. Gold and White Card holders might be eligible to receive these.
- Talk to your GP or physiotherapist about getting up safely from a fall and when you should stay lying down.
- Even if you felt fine after having a fall, speak to your GP who can look at the possible causes and take steps to prevent a future fall.