

# Doncaster Falls Service



## Help yourself to health

# Prevent falls

Falling can be a common problem but it can often be avoided if some simple advice is followed.

Experts in their field have contributed to this booklet so that the best and most up-to-date information is available for you.

It includes advice on what to do if you fall, or someone else falls.

Keep this booklet handy so that you can be reminded of the advice.

We hope it will be of use to you.

The important thing is that preventing falls is not just about hazards around you, but it's also about what you wear on your feet, what you eat, how active you are, and what steps you take to prevent falls happening.

*Inside this pack you will find information on:*

General safety	page 2-7
Medicines	page 8
Postural hypotension	page 9
Vision and hearing loss	page 10
Exercise	page 11
Footwear and footcare	page 12-13
Osteoporosis	page 14-15
Diet	page 16-18
What to do after a fall	page 19-20
Your local contacts	page 21

For more help and addresses, see ***Your Local Contacts*** at the back of this booklet. Please keep this booklet for future reference.

Help yourself to health

# Loss of confidence

If you have had a fall or are worried about falling then there are some important things to remember:

- anyone can have a fall - you are not alone!
- falling is frightening and people do feel less confident after a fall. Do you find that you:
  - 1 Are more careful with your walking, maybe slower or doing less?
  - 2 Are leaving the house less often, or not going as far?
  - 3 Are worried about what might happen if you fall again?
- answering yes to one or all of these questions is common and may mean you have lost some confidence
- but remember there are lots of things that you can do to reduce your risk of falling and improve your confidence
- this booklet is full of ideas to help increase your confidence by taking control. Keep reading to learn what you can do to help yourself
- if your concerns are affecting you a lot then speak to a member of the healthcare team.



# Reduce the risk of falling

## Bathroom



### Do:

- try and have someone in the house when you are in the bath
- use a non-slip bath mat
- make sure you have everything you need, eg soap, shampoo, towels, before you get into the bath
- have a stool or chair at hand in the bathroom in case you feel dizzy
- find out which bathroom equipment you can have fitted, such as grab rails.

### Don't:

- lock the bathroom door
- have the bath water too hot
- rush out of the bath.



## Bedroom

### Do:

- make sure your bed is the right height for you
- have a light by the bed, so that it can be switched off from the bed
- try and have a telephone extension or your 'home alone' alarm call pendant by your bed.



## Callers

### Do:

- warn any callers that it may take a little longer to answer the door.

### Don't:

- be tempted to hurry to the door or telephone.

## Clothing

### Do:

- wear clothing that allows your legs and feet to move freely.

### Don't:

- wear clothing that is too long or too tight.



## Furniture

### Do:

- make sure furniture is sturdy and arranged so you can move freely in your room
- remove castors on chairs to make them stable.

### Don't:

- lean on furniture which could move or topple over
- use furniture as a walking aid.

## Hall & Stairway

### Do:

- make sure you have two-way light switches on the stairs
- make sure you have a handrail on the stairs, preferably two handrails
- fit a letter cage for your post to prevent you bending down.



## Heating

### Do:

- have your gas fire control and ignition on top of your fire.

### Don't:

- worry if the controls are not on the top, contact a gas advisor for help.

## Kitchen

### Do:

- make sure you are near a work surface in case you need to put hot or heavy items down quickly
- make sure you have a stool or chair in the kitchen in case you need to sit down when you are tired
- wipe up spills on the floor - slippery floors can cause a fall
- keep everyday items within easy reach.

### Don't:

- reach up to high cupboards
- store everyday items too high or too low.

## Lighting

### Do:

- keep rooms and stairways well lit
- use a 100 watt bulb or long-life equivalent to make it easier to see
- use long-life bulbs - you can leave them on longer; they work out cheaper
- remember, long-life bulbs may take a minute or so before they give full light.

## Rugs

### Do:

- make sure rugs and loose carpets are tacked down or removed if it makes the room safer.

## Walking aids

### Do:

- make sure you use walking aids that are provided for you
- check the rubber at the base of your walking aid and change when worn down.

### Don't:

- carry objects when using a walking frame.



## Wires

### Do:

- make sure all electric wires and telephone cables are tucked away so you don't trip over them.



## Medicines

Some medicines can make you more likely to fall, for example: antidepressants, sleeping tablets and other sedatives. Sometimes tablets for blood pressure can work a little too well and make you dizzy when you stand up.

### Note:

- it is important not to stop taking a medicine without first asking your doctor.

### Do:

- follow the instructions for taking your medicines
- attend the surgery when you are asked to attend for review - it is important to check that medicines are working and not causing you any problems
- ask your surgery about medication review if you, or someone you care for, is struggling to take medicines as prescribed
- ask your surgery about medication review if your treatment has changed recently and you are unsure about your medicines
- talk to your community pharmacist (chemist) if you have difficulty opening child-resistant tops. They may be able to give you ordinary screw tops or different packaging
- be aware of feelings of dizziness or excessive drowsiness and speak to your doctor if you are concerned
- know your medicines - all medicines are supplied with patient information leaflets.

### Don't

- change the amount you have been told to take, or take it at a different time, without first discussing it with your doctor
- share or give your medicines to anyone else. They were prescribed for you and may be harmful to other people.



**Ask yourself: do you forget to take your medication? If so, speak to a member of the healthcare team.**



## **Postural hypotension/Dizziness**

Postural hypotension is a drop in blood pressure during a change in position. This reduces the amount of blood going to your brain and can cause dizziness, falls, and blackouts.

The fall in blood pressure can occur at any time and may happen after getting up from either lying or sitting positions.

### **The following measures will help you prevent this:**

- see your GP to ensure that there are no medical reasons for your symptoms
- symptoms are likely to be at their worst in the morning when blood pressure is at its lowest. Take extra care at this time, especially getting up in the morning
- raise the head of the bed with pillows so you are not sleeping flat. This will help to reduce the change in position when you sit up
- get out of bed slowly. Exercising your arms and legs before sitting up, and again before standing, is often helpful
- remember to sit back down again if you feel dizzy. If possible lie down flat
- do not rush off when you have stood up. Stand for a short period to make sure you do not feel dizzy. It may be beneficial to walk on the spot before moving away from the bed or chair
- some people can have bigger drops in blood pressure after large meals. It may be beneficial to have five or six smaller meals rather than three large ones
- try not to sit or stand in one position for too long, particularly when it is hot
- if you have to stand for long periods, then try moving your feet up and down to encourage blood flow
- ensure you drink plenty of fluids throughout the day - 1½ to 2 litres are recommended daily amounts
- your doctor may advise you to increase your salt intake
- you may be prescribed high-leg support tights
- your doctor may prescribe you new medication or alter your existing medications.

## Vision and hearing loss

You can experience falls due to sight or hearing loss.

### Vision

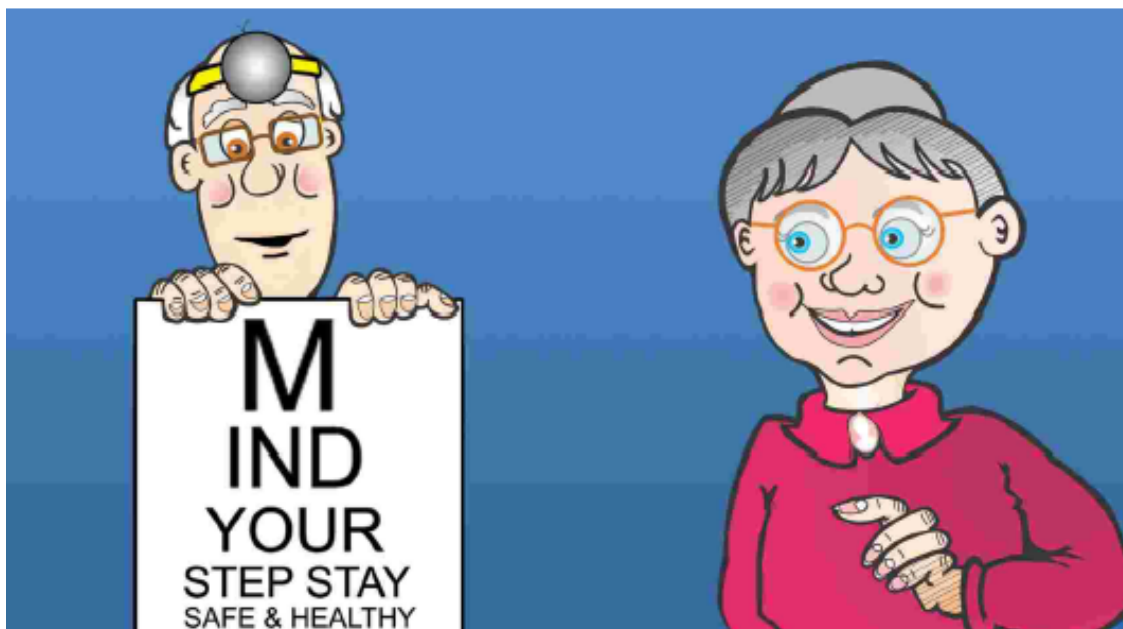
#### Do:

- have your eyesight checked regularly
- remember - your eyesight tests are free if you are 60 or over
- check to see if you qualify for help towards the cost of your glasses
- remember to wear your glasses and keep them clean and in good condition. Make sure you are wearing the correct glasses
- contact your optician to ask if they can visit you if you are housebound
- take care on steps and stairs when you wear your glasses, especially if you wear varifocals or bifocals. Two pairs are better than one
- if you are registered blind or partially sighted, take extra care and make sure you access the support available from the eye department or social services.

### Hearing loss

#### Do:

- if you have difficulty with hearing, go to your doctor who can refer you to hospital for checks
- if you already wear a hearing aid, make sure you attend your regular appointments with audiology
- maintain your hearing aid, keep it clean, and replace batteries regularly.



## Help yourself to health

# Get moving

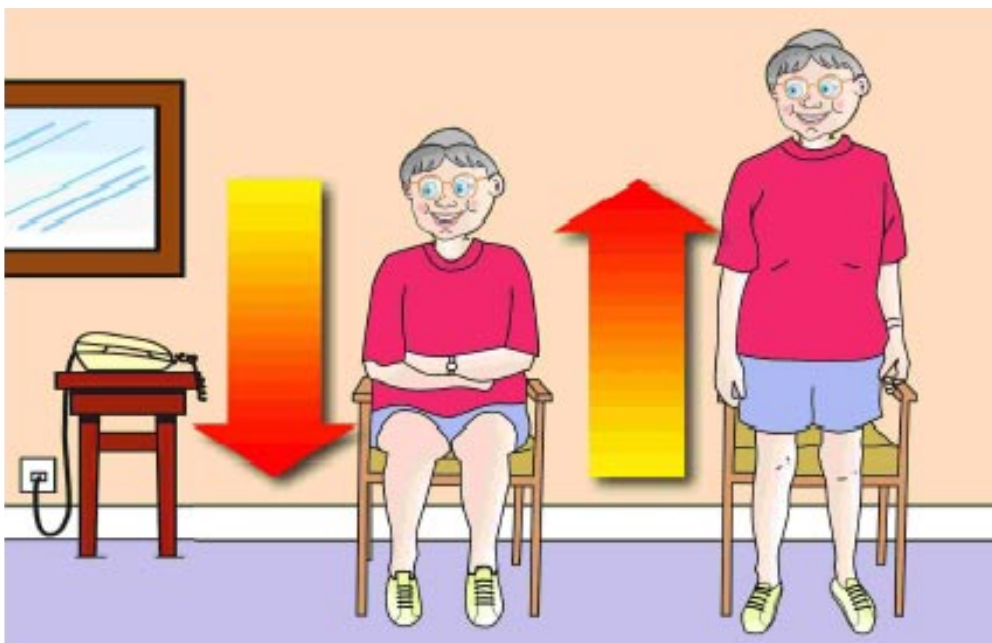
Keeping active is an important part of reducing your risk of falls. Appropriate activities can improve bone density, muscle strength, balance and the confidence to carry out daily activities. The level of physical activity will depend on your general health. You may be referred to a physiotherapist or exercise group for advice on suitable exercise. There is some basic advice you can follow:

### Do:

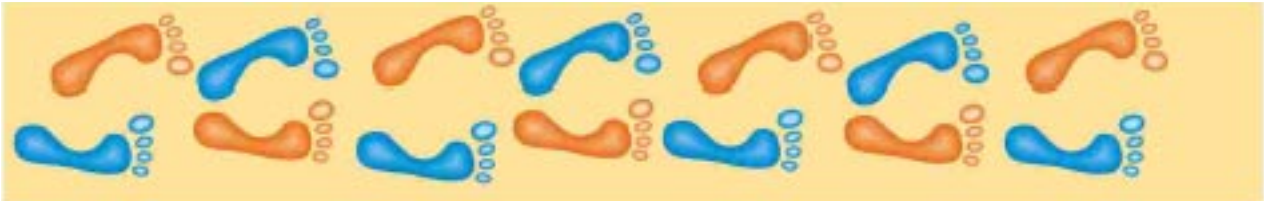
- check with your doctor or nurse before starting on any new physical activity, particularly if you have not exercised for some time
- start with gentle exercise, such as walking for a short period of time every day, and then gradually work up to around half an hour
- warm up with some gentle stretches
- wear suitable footwear and loose fitting clothing
- regular arm and leg movements. If you have limited mobility, you can do this sitting in a chair.

### Don't

- exercise if you are tired, ill, or have just eaten
- overdo it or exercise if it hurts too much. You may experience some stiffness at first, but this will eventually ease off
- do any sudden or jerky movements, especially tipping your head back or turning your head suddenly
- stand up too quickly in case you get dizzy.



# Footwear and footcare



As we get older, our feet often start to protest about the way we have treated them over the years - so it's important to take good care of them.

The following will help you to care for your feet and may help to reduce the risk of falling.

## Footwear

### Do:

- ask to have your feet measured when buying new footwear. Shoes, boots, and slippers should fit properly. As we get older, the size and shape of our feet can alter
- wear shoes with non-slip soles - they will prevent you from slipping on some surfaces
- wear footwear that protects and supports your feet. Feeling safe and secure when you walk is important
- use fastenings such as laces, buckles or velcro. They will help to secure your feet inside your shoes. Lace fastenings are best, but velcro is a good alternative
- wear shoes with high sides and an enclosed heel. They will help to reduce the risk of your foot slipping out of your shoes
- ensure natural foot movement during walking. Shoes with soft supple uppers are recommended
- soles should be lightly padded but NOT thick and spongy
- avoid high heels - flat is better
- avoid wearing slippers all day.

## Footcare

Good simple footcare is important.

### Do:

- wash your feet daily in warm soapy water, rinse well and dry with a soft towel, taking care to dry well between your toes
- reduce dry, hard skin by using a foot file. They are available from your local chemist
- keep your skin supple by gently massaging moisturising cream into the soles and heels of your feet each day
- trim your toe nails at least once a month. Always cut them straight across without cutting down the sides of your nails
- prevent your nails from getting too long by using a long-handled foot file once a week.

### Don't

- ignore minor foot troubles. They are unlikely to get better by themselves. If you are in any doubt, see your doctor or see a Health Professional Council Registered Chiropodist or Podiatrist, especially if you have diabetes mellitus.



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# Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis is a common condition where bones have become very fragile and weak making them easy to break. There are many factors that may increase your risk of osteoporosis:

- a broken bone after a minor bump or fall
- a family history of a broken hip after a minor bump or fall
- undergoing the menopause before the age of 45
- taking corticosteroid tablets (cortisone, prednisolone) for more than 6 months
- a loss of height of more than 5cm (2")
- irregular periods (stopped for 12 months or more for reasons other than pregnancy or the menopause)
- drinking too much alcohol
- frequently suffering from diarrhoea (caused by problems such as Coeliac disease or Crohn's disease)
- suffering from certain medical conditions such as:
  - rheumatoid arthritis
  - malabsorption syndrome
  - chronic kidney disease
  - liver disease
  - low testosterone levels in men.

Having one or more of these factors may make you at risk of osteoporosis. Your doctor or practice nurse can advise on further tests or treatment, if necessary. Consult them if you are concerned. If diagnosed with osteoporosis, treatments are available to help strengthen bones.

## **There are a number of things you can do to protect your bones:**

- stop smoking, as this can damage the bone-building cells in the body
- keep your alcohol intake low. Excessive alcohol can destroy bones and make you unsteady
- try to take some sort of exercise – see our section on ‘Get Moving’
- try to go outdoors often as daylight is an important source of vitamin D, essential for strong bones
- eat a well balanced diet – see ‘What I eat’ section.

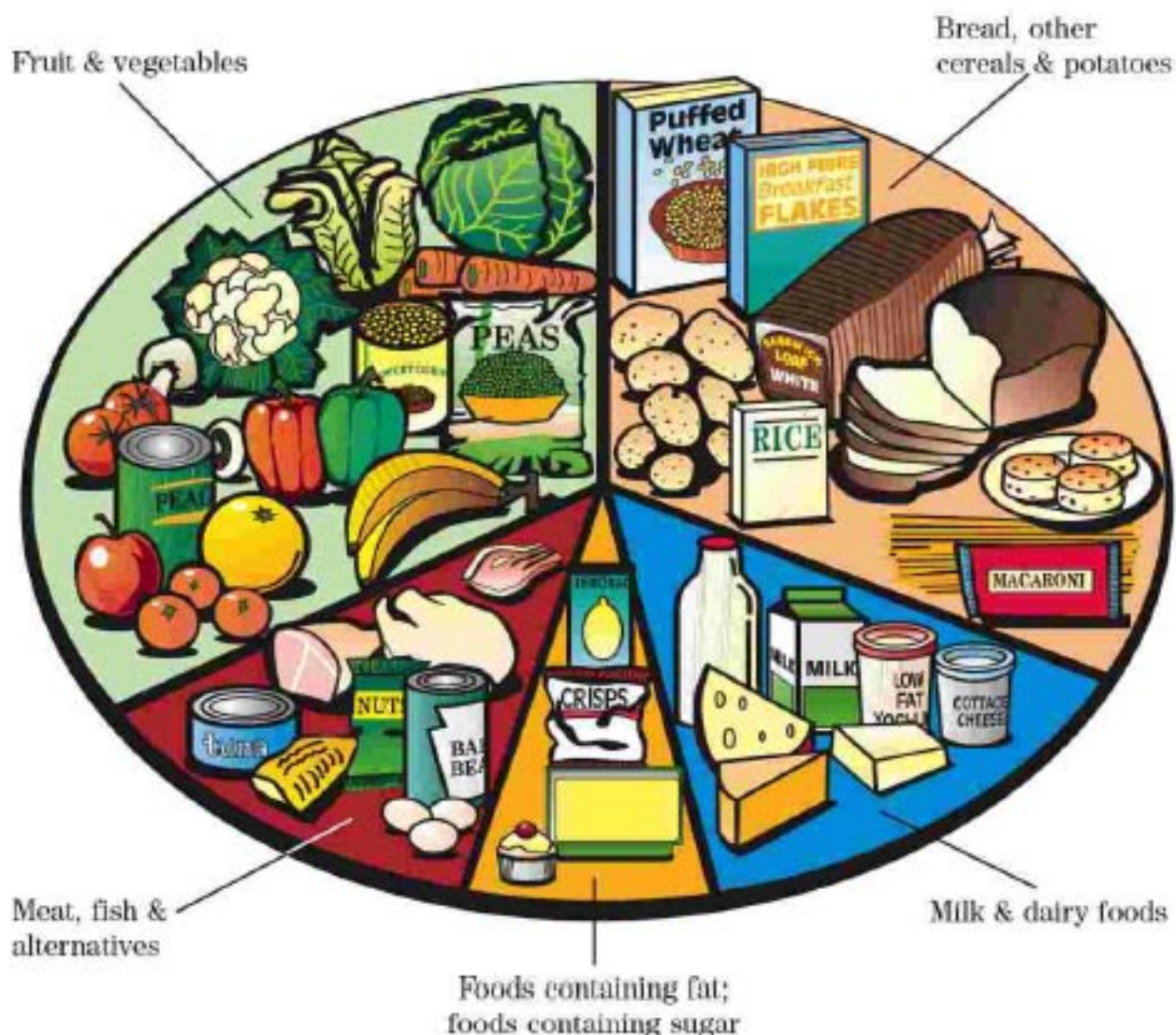


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# What I eat - does it make a difference?

Yes! What you eat does make a difference! It is important to eat a well-balanced diet to obtain all the protein, vitamins, minerals and other nutrients that your body requires. This will help to keep your body strong and healthy. Eating a well-balanced diet helps to keep your bones and muscles in good working order. Having strong bones and muscles is very important in helping to prevent falls.

The diagram below shows the proportions of food that you should be eating to achieve a healthy, balanced diet:



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# Calcium and Vitamin D are particularly important nutrients ...

## Calcium

A good supply of calcium is essential for the development of strong, healthy bones and for the prevention of soft/brittle bones (known as osteoporosis) in later life.

Milk and dairy foods are the richest sources of calcium. These include:

- milk
- cheese
- yoghurts
- fromage frais
- milky puddings.

Other sources of calcium include:

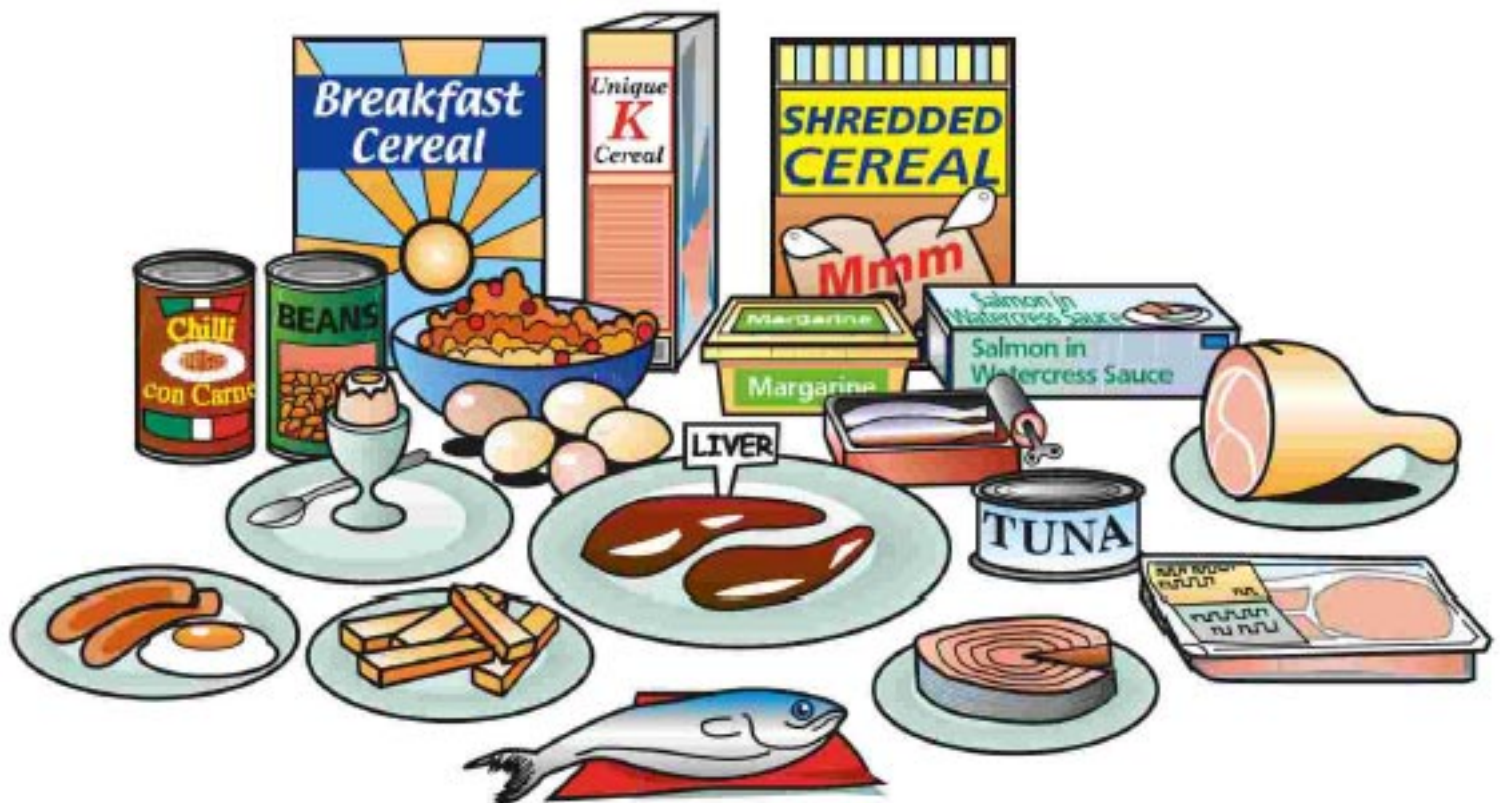
- fish with soft bones (sardines, salmon and pilchards)
- dried fruits (apricots, prunes, raisins and dates)
- dark leafy green vegetables
- kidney beans and lentils
- bread, especially white bread
- nuts.

## Vitamin D

Vitamin D is needed by your body to absorb the calcium from your diet. The main source of vitamin D comes from the action of sunlight on your skin, so try to spend some time in the sunlight every day. If this is not possible, vitamin D can also be obtained from certain foods.

Food sources of vitamin D include:

- margarine
- eggs
- liver
- oily fish (pilchards, mackerel, salmon and sardines)
- breakfast cereals.





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# What should I do if I have a fall?

## What to do:

- be prepared - knowing what to do could make all the difference
- check first to make sure you are not injured
- think about how you would get up from the floor. You may want to try to get on to your hands and knees near a chair or settee first before getting up
- check if you are near a telephone
- think of other ways of getting help (a pendant alarm around your neck helps you to summon help)
- try and keep warm. Check if there is a cover nearby. It doesn't need to be a blanket, it could be a coat or a towel.



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# What should I do if somebody else has a fall?

## **Do:**

- stay calm
- check to see if they are seriously hurt
- keep them warm and summon help.

## **Don't:**

- give them anything to eat or drink.

This document has been designed by all the professionals of the South Tees Falls Service who have given their kind permission for its use by the Doncaster Falls Service.

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# Prevent falls - your local contacts

**Citizens' Advice Bureau**

Doncaster Advice Line  
Guildhall Advice Centre  
Old Guildhall Yard  
Doncaster  
Telephone: 01302 735232

**Mexborough Advice Line**

Lindsay Centre  
Hall Gate  
Mexborough  
Telephone: 01709 585827

**Thorne Advice Line**

5a Brown's Lane  
Thorne  
Telephone: 01405 814064

**Neighbourhood Health Centre**

14 Church Street  
Stainforth  
Telephone: 01302 842845

**Doncaster Metropolitan  
Borough Council**

Council House  
College Road  
Doncaster  
Telephone: 01302 734444

**Doncaster Primary Care Trust**

Ten Pound Walk  
Doncaster  
Telephone: 01302 320111

**Doncaster & Bassetlaw Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust**

Doncaster Falls Specialist  
Telephone: 01302 796458

**Bassetlaw Primary Care Trust**

Retford Road  
Retford  
Nottinghamshire  
Telephone: 01777 274400

**Age Concern Doncaster**

109 Thorne Road  
Doncaster  
Telephone: 01302 812345

**Doncaster Social Services**

Doncaster Metropolitan  
Borough Council  
Council House  
College Road  
Doncaster  
Telephone: 01302 737777

**Leisure Services – Doncaster**

General Enquiries  
Telephone: 01302 737343

**South Yorkshire Centre for Inclusive  
Learning (SYCIL)**

M and M Business Park  
Doncaster Road  
Kirk Sandall  
Doncaster

**Podiatry Services**

East Laith Gate House  
Doncaster  
Telephone: 01302 640050

**National Osteoporosis Society**

Camerton  
Bath  
BA2 0PJ  
Telephone: 0176 147 1771  
or 0845 130 3076

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# Concerns, complaints and comments

We welcome your comments, suggestions, compliments or concerns. By listening to them, we can make sure that we are giving high-quality care to you and others. Please ask to be put in touch with our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) to deal with any general queries you may have. The local PALS numbers are:

**PALS Doncaster PCT**

telephone: 01302 320111

**PALS Bassetlaw PCT**

telephone: 01777 274400

**PALS Doncaster and Bassetlaw Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust**

telephone: 01302 366666 extension 3701

If you have a complaint of any kind, you should first talk to the professional delivering your care, who will try to sort it out. If this is not possible, or you feel you want to take it further, you can write to the Chief Executive's Office of the relevant Trust.



