

Falls Prevention Advice for Lower Limb Amputees

Aintree University Hospital 

NHS Foundation Trust

Prosthetic & Wheelchair Centre
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Introduction

As an amputee you are at an increased risk of falling due to:

- The amputation affecting your balance.
- Phantom feeling in the part of the leg you have lost which may make you think that the foot is on the floor.

If you then try to stand you could lose your balance and fall.

The information in this leaflet will help to reduce your risk of slipping, tripping or falling.

Simple steps you can take to reduce your risk of falling:

Keep healthy

- Eat a healthy balanced diet
- Drink the recommended amount of fluid per day (approximately 6 cups)
- Give up smoking – ask your GP for advice or check the website listed at the back of this leaflet
- Limit your alcohol intake
- If you are diabetic, monitor your sugar levels closely and ask your GP for advice when necessary
- Attend regular medical check-ups, especially if you suffer from high blood pressure or experience heart palpitations, light headedness or losses of consciousness as these can increase your risk of falling

- Have your eyes tested regularly. If you are over 60 years your eye tests are free.

People under 60 years may also qualify for free eye tests if they have certain medical conditions or have a limited income.

You may be able to find a local optician who provides home eye tests if you are housebound

- If you wear glasses, check them regularly to make sure they are clean and in good working order

Keep as active a safety permits

- Appropriate exercises can strengthen your muscles and improve your coordination and balance. It is never too late to start however the exercises must be suitable for you.

If you are attending your local Physiotherapy Department you can ask them for advice on appropriate exercises or ask the Physiotherapists in the Centre.

Exercising in your chair may be safest if you have poor mobility

- If you are having any problems with your balance, you can ask the Physiotherapists in the Centre for an assessment regarding suitable walking aids
- Check your walking aids regularly. Ask for replacements if they become unsafe and change the rubber ferrules as soon as the grooves become less prominent.

New ferrules are available in the Centre

- All walking aids should be measured and set for you. Using someone else's walking aids may increase your risk of falling.
- If you use a wheelchair, put the brakes on whenever you get in or out of it and ensure that it is easily accessible at night
- Many amputees fall when they try to stand up, thinking they have both feet on the floor. Be particularly careful about this when you get up in the night and are not fully alert.

Ask your GP/Pharmacist to check your medications regularly

- Taking four or more different medications can increase your risk of falling. It is important that you know what all your medications are for and if you still need to be taking them
- If you think that any of your medications are causing drowsiness, blurred vision, uncontrolled movements, dizziness or disorientation you may need to consult your GP or Pharmacist. There may be other options available to you

Wear comfortable, well fitting shoes

- Wash and dry your feet daily
- See your GP urgently if you develop any sores on your foot
- Make sure your shoes are in a good state of repair
- Where possible choose secure fitting shoes with non-slip soles
- Do not change the heel height of your shoes without consulting your Prosthetist as this may affect your balance
- You can ask your Prosthetist for advice about suitable footwear

- Avoid using your prosthesis bare foot

Always attend your appointments at the Prosthetic & Wheelchair Centre

- The components in your prosthesis require regular maintenance
- This will be carried out at your annual review appointment
- If you have any concerns about your prosthesis you can contact the Centre for an appointment at any time

Look at your home environment

- Remove loose rugs, trailing wires and unnecessary clutter
- Take care at night time. Do not move around in the dark as this increases your risk of falling.

Make sure you have good lighting especially on the stairs and consider using night lights along the path from the bedroom to the toilet (Handy hint – do not use energy saving bulbs in areas where you may need instant light, such as the stairs)

- Take care not to rush as this can affect your balance
- Keep things you use frequently within easy reach

Useful Contacts

ACSIL – Amputee & Carers Support in Liverpool and all areas of Merseyside. Offers support and social events for amputees and their carers.

www.acsil.co.uk

Tel - 0151 261 1166

Email – acsil.liverpool@gmail.com

NHS Choices – Includes “LIVEWELL” section with advice about over 100 topics on healthy living, including healthy eating and stopping smoking.

www.nhs.uk

NHS Direct – health advice and information service.

www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

Tel – 0845 4647

Diabetes UK

www.diabetes.org.uk

Diabetes UK Careline – 0845 120 2960

Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents – includes advice on preventing accidents in the home.

www.rospa.com

Tel – 0121 248 2000

Email – help@rospa.com