



Unsteady on your feet

What is a fall?

The World Health Organisation defines a fall as ‘an event which results in a person coming to rest inadvertently, on the ground, or floor, or, other lower level’.

There are many factors which may cause you to be unsteady on your feet. These could include:

- loss of strength
- poor balance
- impaired vision
- medications
- insufficient exercise
- foot problems and inappropriate footwear
- poor vision
- medication use
- underlying medical conditions (e.g. delirium)
- environmental hazards
- continence issues
- cognitive impairment

Speak to your doctor if you are concerned about how your health may be affecting your ability to walk. If your mobility needs are more complex a physiotherapist can recommend a specialised walking aid.

Getting an assessment

If you have had at least 1 fall, in the last 12 months, it is recommended that you talk to your GP or allied health professional (occupational therapist or physiotherapist) about having a Falls Risk Screening. They take a detailed history of the events surrounding the fall(s) and conduct balance and mobility tests.

Falls prevention intervention:

There are a number of interventions which can help reduce falls.

These include:

- exercises with focus on strength and balance
- improving vision, such as cataract surgery and visual correction
- home environment safety assessment
- review of medications by GP and pharmacist (every 6 months if you are taking more than 4 different types of medications)
- Vitamin D and calcium supplementation, as directed by your GP and pharmacist

TUGT $\geq$ 12 sec indicates increased risk of falls

STS $\geq$ 12 seconds, increased risk of falls, use 43 cm chair

Alternate step test $\geq$ 10 seconds indicates increased risk of falling

Selecting the correct walking aid can be a complex task. Which walking aid is chosen depends on where the person wants to use it (indoors or outdoors), what is making walking difficult for them (the health condition) and what activities they want to be able to do or continue to do (e.g. walk to the local shops).

Physiotherapists can complete a mobility assessment. They look at how you naturally walk and at which aid will help you if you are unsteady on your feet. A physiotherapist can recommend the most suitable walking aid for you and will also be able to measure and determine the correct height of your walking aid.

Buying an inappropriate walking aid can make walking more difficult and increase the likelihood of falls or injury.

You can hire walking frames. This can be useful if someone needs a walking aid temporarily. Contact ILCT on 1300 452 827 for details.

Falls prevention programs

Falls prevention programs are designed to improve your strength and balance. They can help you become less reliant on a walking aid and to maintain your independence for longer. Programs are run by community physiotherapists in many places in Tasmania. Contact your local physiotherapist or ILCT for details of the program closest to you.



Other helpful suggestions

- Remove obstacles, such as loose mats and clutter, to allow clear and easy access.
- Using other equipment around the home may help to improve your independence. Your treating occupational therapist can help you to decide what equipment you need, or you can call ILCT.
- Install grab rails or modify parts of the home which are difficult to access, e.g. steps.

More information

For further information, or advice, about any item contained in this information sheet, please contact Independent Living Centre Tasmania Inc.(ILCT):

- Call 1300 452 827 to speak to a health professional.
- Visit our website www.ilct.com.au or email info@ilct.com.au.
- ILCT visits communities around Tasmania. Contact ILCT to find out when we will be in your area.

ILCT provides Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Speech Pathology, and Allied Health Assistant services, on a fee-for-service basis. Our team delivers comprehensive assessments and support that may include assistive technology, home modifications, communication aids, and other tailored interventions to enhance independence and quality of life.

ILCT specifically provides supports to those aged over 18, who are Tasmanian residents and are of any culturally-diverse background. ILCT are a registered provider under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

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