



Staying Steady and Independent with Dementia

Hints and tips to help reduce your chance of falling



With thanks to






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Contents

Pages

4 - 5	Welcome: Dementia and Falling	
6 - 8	Seeing and Hearing	
9 - 11	Medicines	
12 - 16	Eating Well	
17 - 20	Staying Active	
21 - 23	Looking after your Feet	
24 - 28	Your Home	
29 - 30	Out and About	
31 - 32	Getting help if you fall	
33	Summary	
34 - 35	Further information	



Welcome: Dementia and Falling

Thank you for taking time to consider how you can help yourself to stay steady and independent with dementia.

You might be nervous because you've had a fall already – or because you've noticed you're starting to feel unsteady on your feet. A fall can leave you feeling quite shaken – and even the thought of falling might affect your confidence.

It is common to think that feeling unsteady is an inevitable part of ageing but that is not the case. Falls can be prevented and we want to help you understand what you can do to help yourself.





As a person living with dementia, you are four times more likely to experience a trip or a fall. Dementia can change the way you see, hear and how you feel about things.

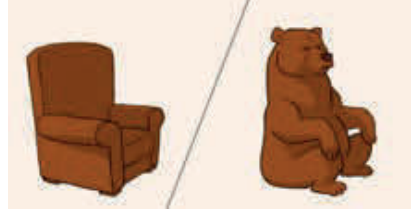
But just like anyone else, you could also fall because of other health problems, or you may be poorly or tired.

If you do fall this could have a huge impact on your life but here are some simple tips that can help you to stay strong, steady and independent.

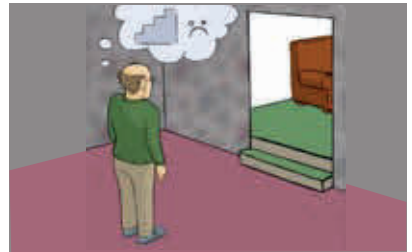


Seeing: things that may seem different when living with Dementia

Objects and patterns may change into something else in your mind



If carpet or flooring is a different colour between rooms, it can look like steps



Shiny flooring can appear wet



Poor lighting can cause shadows and change the way things look



A dark-coloured mat may appear to be a hole



Hearing: things that may seem different when living with Dementia

Loud or unexpected noise can really startle





How to help you see and hear better with Dementia



Have your eyes tested every 12 - 24 months.



Make sure your glasses are kept clean and fit properly.



Have your hearing tested regularly. Make sure your hearing aids are working and worn correctly.



Avoid stripes and strong patterns on furniture and flooring. Instead, have light plain flooring and try to colour contrast this with your furniture.



Put away all rugs and mats.



Make sure your home is well lit, especially in risky areas like on the stairs and in the kitchen / bathroom.



Read more about dementia friendly environments in the Alzheimer's Society 'Making Your Home More Dementia Friendly'. Making your home dementia friendly (alzheimers.org.uk)



Use Memory Techniques, such as a calendar or diary, to help you remember things. See Alzheimer's Society for information on Memory aids & tools | Alzheimer's Society (alzheimers.org.uk). It can also help to have a well organised home to help you to know where to find things.



Medicines: how they might affect you and your Dementia

As you get older you often have to take more medications.

- These medications can have side effects which may make you more likely to fall.
- Some medications might make you need to go to the toilet more or have to rush to get there.
- If your medication has changed, it may take a bit of time before everything settles down.

Always speak with a medical professional if:

- There are any changes to your health.
- Any medicine makes you feel worse.
- You do not want to take your medicine.
- You cannot take your medications.



Your GP, Pharmacist or District Nurse can help if you are experiencing any problems or if you are worried.

- ✓ It's ok to ask questions about your medicines – don't be afraid to do so.
- ✓ Take your medicine according to the directions.
- ✓ Keep a list of all medications including prescriptions, over the counter medications, vitamins, and herbals.
- ✓ Keep all your medicines in the same place.
- ✓ If possible, try to only use one pharmacy.
- ✓ A medication dispenser might help you to be more organised with your tablets and take them at the right time



(your pharmacy can put them into a blister pack for you).



Always get rid of any out-of-date medication or any medicines that you are no longer taking. You can take these back to your pharmacy.



Medication should be reviewed yearly by your GP. Follow-up with your GP if this doesn't happen.



Never stop taking prescribed medication suddenly.



Alcohol and medications are not a great mix.



Eating Well: things that may be difficult with dementia

Have you noticed a difference in how things taste, smell or the texture of your food?

That could be dementia too. You may also get a sweet tooth!

- If you don't eat and drink properly, you may struggle to concentrate, feel weaker more tired or more lightheaded. This might increase the chances of you falling and hurting yourself.
- You may notice that you get full more easily or your appetite reduces.
- As you get older you won't be able to tolerate alcohol as well as you may have done in the past.
- Have you noticed that it is difficult to swallow certain foods and drinks?



- Are your dentures becoming loose? This can make it more difficult to chew foods. Is food tasting unpleasant?
- When did you last go to the dentist? It important to see the dentist regularly as this can affect what you are able to eat and drink.
- Are you losing weight unexpectedly?
- Your clothes might not fit correctly if you lose weight. Try not to trip over them!



Contact **Ageing Well** if you are concerned about weight loss and loss of appetite by calling **0808 175 3234** (freephone) or texting **07770 061072** Monday to Friday, 9am - 5pm, or via email : **ageingwellbh@impact-initiatives.org.uk**



Your GP, a dietitian, speech and language therapist, dentist or district nurse can help if you are experiencing any problems or if you are worried.



Eat regularly – little and often may be preferable to large meals.



Eat a healthy, balanced diet with calcium and protein – they are both really important for bone health. If you don't look after your bones they may break more easily if you fall. Dairy products like milk, cheese and milky puddings as well as bony fish and green leafy vegetables are good for your bones. Plant based alternatives also contain lots of calcium.



Let people know what foods you like or dislike – it's important that they respect this.



Your taste may change, so keep trying a variety of foods and drinks.



Keep a list of your current food and drink preferences and re-try different tastes from time to time.



You might like to add extra flavour to your savoury foods such as herbs, spices, sauces.



Honey and jam can make sweet foods more tasty.



If others are around, why not eat together at the table? Breakfast or lunch clubs as well as dementia friendly cafes can make eating together more enjoyable.



Aim for 6-8 glasses of fluid each day, and try fluid rich foods such as ice-lollies or yogurts.



If you have a sweet tooth, that's fine but be mindful of other health issues.



Reduce your distractions (e.g. TV/radio) when eating.



Visit the dentist regularly.



There are many different types of feeding aids that you can buy such as big handled cutlery and deep lipped plates.



You might find it more difficult to shop and prepare food yourself. Hopefully your family and friends would be willing to help you or carers can be arranged to make things easier for you. Also local and national food delivery services can be helpful. Contact **Ageing Well** for more information.



If you have lost weight, make sure your clothes fit properly. Shorten trousers if they are too long or use a belt or braces. Take time to fasten belts and dressing gown cords.



Good lighting and plain colourful plates such as plain blue, red, yellow or green, can help you to see the food more easily and increase your appetite.



Try not to drink too much caffeine or alcohol as this can cause unsteadiness and dehydration.

If you struggle with your appetite, accessing food or would like to improve your eating habits get in touch with **Ageing Well (01273 322947)** or text **07770 061072**, Monday to Friday, 9am - 5pm or email **ageingwellbh@impact-initiatives.org.uk**).

If you need support with healthy eating or losing weight, phone the **Healthy Lifestyles Team** on **01273 294 589** or email **healthylifestyles@brighton-hove.gov.uk**



Staying Active: things that may be difficult with dementia

Being active can help you maintain your strength, balance and flexibility and improve your energy levels, so that you can carry on doing the things you enjoy. Our bodies were made to move.

Have you noticed a change in how you are walking? That could be dementia too.

- Between the ages of 50 and 70 we lose 30% of our muscle strength.
- Bones naturally become more brittle as we age which makes a fracture more likely if we fall.
- Sitting still for a long period of time increases the risk of falls.
- Lack of exercise and activity can make us weaker.



For information about local free activities or to get support with increasing physical activity, phone the **Healthy Lifestyles Team** on **01273 294 589** or email healthylifestyles@brighton-hove.gov.uk



Find ways to try to move a bit more throughout the day – in whatever way works for you. Being active doesn't have to mean doing vigorous exercise or even doing anything outside your normal routine. Remember "if you don't use it, you lose it!"



Walking is great for your heart and lungs and has lots of health benefits but walking itself is not enough to improve your strength and balance.



Use everyday activities like gardening, housework and walking to keep you moving. Even dancing or passing a balloon is good exercise. It's easier to keep up an activity you enjoy – that's when you'll improve and begin to feel the benefits.



In addition to walking try strength and balance activities such as strength and balance classes, dance, racket sports, yoga or gardening. These will enable you to Stay Strong, Steady and Independent throughout your life. To find out about what's available locally contact **Ageing Well** by calling **0808 175 3234** (freephone), texting **07770 061072** or by visiting Ageing Well Website via **www.ageingwellbh.org**



Keep warm as cold muscles don't work as well and may lead to accidents and injuries.



Limit or break up the length of time you spend sitting. When watching TV, try and move your limbs and get up to walk about during the adverts or between programmes.



Get up slowly after lying/sitting and pause a moment before you start walking.



Regularly pop outside into the sunshine – Vitamin D is really important for bone health. If you don't look after your bones they will break more easily if you fall. But use sunscreen if you are outside for any length of time.



Walking aids are a great way to help you to stay steady. Be sure to keep it close by.



Ensure your walking aid has a rubber end (called a ferrule) to stop it slipping. You can buy a new one of these if it is worn down. Call Ageing Well if you are not sure where to get it.



Looking after your feet

As we get older our feet may feel painful, become swollen or start to tingle. Uncomfortable feet aren't a natural part of growing old or something to put up with. A lot can be done to improve comfort and relieve pain.



Our feet also change shape and can lose feeling as well as flexibility. The shoes we had 10 years ago may not be right any more.



A chiropodist is trained to look after people's feet and advise you on proper foot care.

Ask at the GP practice to see an NHS chiropodist (also known as a podiatrist) but be aware that there may be restrictions on who can be referred.

To find a private chiropodist or podiatrist, contact the **College of Podiatry** phone **020 7234 8620**
www.rcpod.org.uk



Keeping active and on the move helps to keep feet healthy. It tones up muscles, helps to strengthen arches and stimulates blood circulation.



Keeping your feet warm is important. Warm stockings or socks can help, but avoid anything too tight which can restrict your circulation or cramp your toes.



Trim or file your toenails regularly. Use a pumice stone or foot file on hard skin.



Check your feet regularly and moisturise them (not between the toes) to help keep them supple and avoid painful cracking.



Ask family or friends to help if you are struggling to reach your feet.



Well cushioned shoes offer more comfort. Try to avoid shoes with high heels or sandals with little support.



Make sure your shoes fit well and don't have a tendency to slip off. You'll find that a lace, strap, buckle or Velcro-fastening shoe will give more support.



Your shoes should be roomy enough, particularly if you intend to wear them every day.



Comfy slippers can be like old friends but if they have holes in the soles, broken backs or if the fit is sloppy they should be considered as worn out.



Slippers should ideally fasten, cover the whole foot and have a back on to make sure they stay on and provide grip. They should have a good sole. A long-handled shoehorn might help to get them on your feet.



Never walk in socks and tights on hard floors – it's like ice-skating!



Your Home

As we get older, our homes get older too and we often don't notice problems because we have lived with them for so long.

Falls are more likely to happen in the kitchen and bathroom/toilet areas where floors can be wet and more serious injuries can be caused.

Sometimes objects blend into the background if they are a similar colour so you may not notice them.

Take a few minutes to look around your home, what could you slip or trip on?



Buy pets a bright collar and a bell to wear which will let you know they are near by. A surprising number of pets can get under your feet!

Some people feel unsteady getting on and off their:

- Chair
- Bed
- Toilet

Are you finding any of these difficult?

Some people also struggle to get in and out of the bath.



Remove all rugs, bath and pedestal mats and ask someone to secure loose carpets.



Your GP, or an Occupational Therapist can help if you are experiencing any problems or if you are worried.



Make sure there are no trailing wires / flexes or obstacles which might be in the way.



Make sure your stairs and landings are totally clear of any ornaments and objects.



Use a chair with a firm seat and arms as this is easier. Try not to get up and down from the chair too quickly and wait a moment until you set off.



Keep things tidy!



Consider automatic sensor lights.



Always put the lights on at dusk and never walk about in the dark.



Always use your bedside lamp. Touch lamps can be easier to reach. Keep a good torch by your bed.



Use brighter bulbs or extra lights, especially on the stairs and in the toilet.



Make signs with one word and a simple picture to put on your doors to help you know which room it is. Or it can be easier to find your way round by leaving room doors open which you use regularly and closing the doors to rooms you don't use.








Rearrange cupboards in the kitchen and bathroom so that the things you use the most are within easy reach. Place photos of the cupboard contents on the outside of the doors.



Try to fit rails on the stairs or grab rails around your home that are a contrasting colour to the wall so that you can see them more easily.



Why not try having a colour contrast toilet seat?

-  Use a non-slip, colour contrast, plain, suction bathmat.
-  Keep the floors dry and clear up spills straight away.
-  When you are going into your garden ensure the patio/path/flag stones are level and securely fixed.
-  Make sure there is no moss, overgrown plants or obstacles which might be in the way. Keep things tidy!
-  Avoid tasks such as cleaning windows or changing light bulbs if they make you feel dizzy or light-headed.

Apply for home aids & adaptations to enable you to stay independent for as long as possible.

If you have a disability or a long-term illness or health condition, you might benefit from making some changes to your home, adapting it to better meet your needs. You can apply for a disabled facilities grant from the council if you need to make changes to your home. The type of repairs, adaptations and renewals that can be funded are not specified, and so it is all about changes that can make a difference.

See: <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/disabled-facilities-grants>

To contact email: AccessPoint@brighton-hove.gov.uk
or phone: 01273 295 555



Out and About

Take your time and don't rush. It's OK to be slower than you used to be. Try not to worry if you feel you are inconveniencing others, go at your own pace.



Carrying shopping bags can affect your balance, trip you up and obstruct your view of the pavement. Could you use a rucksack instead?



Have your bus pass / money ready in advance so you can concentrate when getting on and off the bus safely.



Don't be afraid to ask the bus driver to wait until you are seated before setting off moving.



Your family or friends can help if you are experiencing any problems or feeling worried about going on your own.



Getting help if you fall

If you do ever fall getting help is essential!



If possible, carry a charged cordless landline or mobile phone with you, use your pendant alarm or bang on the wall, radiator or floor.



If you can, as pain allows, keep moving your body gently to help with circulation and to keep warm.



Try and stay warm by covering yourself with anything you can reach – throw/blanket, duvet, coat.



Put a cushion under your head or roll up an item of clothing.



Try to move away from direct heat sources which could cause injury (e.g. a fire or radiator).



If possible, reach for a drink and keep sipping fluids.



If possible, have at least one telephone on a surface which can be reached from the floor.



Personal alarms can be used around the clock, to call for help in the event of a fall.



Voice activated digital assistants (e.g. Alexa) can help you make a phone call in the event of an emergency.



You can apply for an alarm that's worn round your neck or wrist.

If you fall, feel unwell or need help in an emergency, you can call for help by pressing a button on the alarm. If you can't apply online email: CarelinkPlus@brighton-hove.gov.uk

or phone **0300 123 3301**





Summary

If you have already fallen, you are likely to have reduced confidence and worry about it happening again.

This may stop you from doing things that you enjoy.

- **Stay positive and try to build up your strength and balance gradually by doing simple exercises (see the back of the booklet), set yourself small, gradual and realistic goals.**
- If you had more than one fall this year or feel unsteady or have difficulties with walking or balance or are less able to do the things you used to be able to before the fall please speak to your GP or contact Ageing Well as you may need to be referred to Falls and Fractures prevention services.
- **Never be afraid to ask for support; people are always happy to help.**

This leaflet has been produced as a dementia friendly information guide by the Dementia Focused Occupational Therapist and the Commissioning Officer for Dementia from Sheffield City Council. It has been adapted by the Healthy Lifestyles Development Officer – Ageing Well and Age and Dementia Friendly Public Health Specialist at Brighton & Hove City Council.

It can be used as a stand-alone document, or the relevant sections can be shared with people as part of a professional's intervention to inform a person about Staying Steady and Independent with Dementia.

For more info contact publichealth@brighton-hove.gov.uk



Further information

Useful links

Ageing Well single point of contact for people over 50 in Brighton and Hove. Ageing Well can provide information and advice for you on local dementia friendly activities that can support you to stay strong and keep your independence.

To find out what is available call **01273 322947** or text **07770 061072** (Monday to Friday, 9am - 5pm) or email **ageingwellbh@impact-initiatives.org.uk**

Dementia Connect advisers can support you directly by phone or face to face and connect you to a range of local services.

Call **01273 726266** or email **brightonhoveDSW@alzheimers.org.uk**

Brighton & Hove Memory Assessment Service (MAS)

provides assessment, diagnosis, treatment, support and advice for people with memory problems and their loved ones.

Your named Memory Support Worker will support you and your loved ones, connect you to services, and can link you with peer support groups that provide support, information and friendship.

Call **0300 555 0175** or Visit **www.memorybrightonhove.org.uk**

Healthy Lifestyles Team

For free local physical activities and HealthWalks or support with:

- healthy eating
- increasing physical activity
- reducing alcohol
- stopping and cutting down smoking
- losing weight
- general wellbeing

Email: **healthylifestyles@brighton-hove.gov.uk**
or call **01273 294 589**

Standing Tall

Standing Tall physio-led classes last an hour and cost just £2-£6! All our classes are lead by qualified, experienced Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists or Physiotherapy Assistants who are trained Postural Stability Instructors. This means that people can improve their balance and strength in a safe and supportive environment.

For any general queries, please email Standing Tall on: **info@standingtall.net**

See the weekly class schedule on **www.standingtall.net** (if you can't access the website call for more information).

To get started and for an initial friendly chat, call:

East Brighton - Julie on **07736 122941**

West Brighton - Ruth on **07399 993426**

Carelink

Telecare describes a range of services and equipment that allow you to call for help in an emergency. This could be in and outside the home. Telecare can increase your independence and help you feel safe.

You can apply for an alarm that's worn round your neck or wrist. If you fall, feel unwell or need help in an emergency, you can call for help by pressing a button on the alarm.

Telecare can help:

- if you're likely to fall,
- keep you safe from fire, carbon monoxide and flood.
- keep you safe at home during the day and night.
- keep you safe when you're out and about.
- support your family or carers.
- if you have a health condition like dementia or epilepsy.

If you need help filling in this form, you can:

Email **CarelinkPlus@brighton-hove.gov.uk**

or call **0300 123 3301**

Access Point

If you have a disability or a long-term illness or health condition, you might benefit from making some changes to your home, adapting it to better meet your needs. You can apply for a disabled facilities grant from the council if you need to make changes to your home. The type of repairs, adaptations and renewals that can be funded are not specified, and so it is all about changes that can make a difference.

Visit <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/disabled-facilities-grants>

Contact via email

AccessPoint@brighton-hove.gov.uk

or call **01273 295 555**

Physical activities online:

The NHS has a useful page on **activities for dementia**

www.nhs.uk/conditions/dementia/activities

Love to Move's dementia friendly chair-based activity videos and a helpful booklet are available. <https://britishgymnasticsfoundation.org/lovetomove/>

Make sure that any furniture you're sitting on or using for support is stable and strong. Wear comfortable clothing, keep water to hand and go at your own pace.

Chiropodists are trained to look after people's feet and advise you on proper foot care. Ask at the GP practice to see an NHS chiropodist (also known as a podiatrist), but be aware that there may be restrictions on who can be referred.

To find a private chiropodist or podiatrist, contact the College of Podiatry **020 7234 8620** www.rcpod.org.uk

If you have diabetes, you should have your feet screened as part of your annual diabetes review to look for, and monitor, any changes.

HealthWatch – If you are looking for information on local health or social care services or signposting to raise a complaint.

Call **01273 234 040**

Email **info@**

healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk

If they are not available, please leave a message and they will get back to you.

For more helpful tips on making your home more dementia friendly, including a helpful checklist please see the following document:
<https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/get-support/publications-factsheets/making-your-home-dementia-friendly>

References

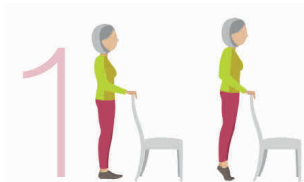


- Chartered Society of Physiotherapy leaflet: 'Get up and go: a guide to staying steady' <https://www.csp.org.uk/publications/get-go-guide-staying-steady-english-version>
- Age UK guide: 'Staying Steady' <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/services/information-advice/guides-and-factsheets/>

Images

- Centre for Ageing Better's Age Positive Image Library <https://ageingbetter.resourcespace.com/pages/home.php>
- South Yorkshire Dementia Action Alliances leaflet: 'Keeping people living with dementia safe from trips and falls, safe and well'
- Marney Walker (Independent Occupational Therapist and Lab 4 Living PhD Student) and www.dementiatogether.online
- Microsoft Office stock images

6 exercises from csp_getupandgo_supplement_2016.pdf



Heel Raises

Stand tall, holding the back of a sturdy kitchen-type chair or kitchen sink, then lift your heels off the floor, taking your weight onto your big toes. Hold for three seconds, then lower with control. Repeat 10 times.



Toe Raises

Stand tall holding the same support, then raise your toes – taking your weight on your heels. Don't stick your bottom out. Hold for three seconds, then lower with control. Repeat 10 times.



Sit to Stand

Sit tall near the front of a chair with your feet slightly back. Lean forwards slightly and stand up (with hands on the chair if needed). Step back until your legs touch the chair then slowly lower yourself back into the chair. Repeat 10 times.



Heel-Toe Stand

Stand tall, with one hand on your support. Put one foot directly in front of the other to make a straight line. Look ahead, take your hand off the support and balance for 10 seconds. Take the front foot back to hip width apart. Then place the other foot in front and balance for 10 seconds.




Heel-Toe Walking

Stand tall, with one hand on a support like a kitchen cabinet. Look ahead and walk 10 steps forwards, placing one foot directly in front of the other so that the feet form a straight line. Aim for a steady walking action. Take the feet back to hip width apart, turn around and repeat the steps in the other direction.



One-Leg Stand

Stand close to your support and hold it with one hand. Balance on one leg, keeping the support knee soft and your posture upright. Hold the position for 10 seconds. Repeat on the other leg.

 KEEP THESE EXERCISES SOMEWHERE HANDY LIKE ON THE FRONT OF THE FRIDGE