As you get older you may be at greater risk of having a fall.

Having a fall can be a frightening experience; it can make you feel less confident in yourself and may affect how you get around in the future.

Falls may be prevented if you are aware of the risks. It may just involve you making small changes to your home and lifestyle.

**Have you had a slip, trip or fall in the last year?**

If you have already had a fall, you are more likely to have a fall in the future.

If you are 65 or older, you should tell your doctor or practice nurse if you have fallen, even if you feel well in yourself.

**Do you take a lot of tablets?**

You could be at risk of falling if you take four or more medications regularly.

It is important that your medications are checked regularly by your doctor or pharmacist.
Do you suffer from poor eyesight?

It is really important that you have your eyes checked regularly by an Optician to reduce the risk of any trips or falls. Always remember to clean your glasses and have them close to hand if you need to get up especially during the night.

If you wear bifocal or vari-focal glasses, be aware that they can alter your vision when looking up or down.

Do you have any problems with your bladder or bowels?

Be aware that if you have problems with your bladder or bowels or if you need to make frequent visits to the toilet, that you may be at increased risk of falling, especially when getting up in the night.

Always switch a light on when you get up or think about leaving a light on overnight if you so wish. Also, keep your aids or adaptations close to you.

If you do have any problems with your bladder or bowels, you should discuss this with your doctor or nurse.
Do you eat a healthy diet?

It is really important to eat a healthy diet to keep your energy levels up, maintain your muscle strength and bone health.

Foods rich in Calcium and Vitamin D will help to reduce the risk of bone fractures i.e. milk, and dairy foods, fish, dried fruits, kidney beans and lentils.

Drinking plenty of water will also help to keep you fit and well.

Do you drink alcohol?

Be aware that alcohol can dull your senses and alter your balance. Some tablets you may be taking if mixed with alcohol can increase the likelihood of a fall. Always remember to drink alcohol within the recommended government limits.

Do you exercise?

Try to keep as active as possible, whether this is walking, swimming, dancing, gardening, housework or keep fit classes.

This can strengthen your muscles and improve your balance and co-ordination.
What about clothing and footwear?
Try to wear shoes and slippers with non slip soles that are the correct size and a comfortable fit. Wear footwear that protects and supports your feet. Foot pain and other foot problems contribute to an increased risk of falls. Talk to your podiatrist about keeping your feet healthy.
Always remember that long trailing clothes and nightwear can increase the risk of falling, particularly on stairs and when getting up from the bed or chair.

Do you have adequate lighting in your home?
Try and ensure that you have adequate lighting throughout your home especially on the stairs.

Are you aware of the hazards in and out of your home?
Always be aware of hazards that could increase the chances of you having a fall such as clutter, loose carpets, pets, rugs/loose mats, trailing flexes, worn or torn floor/ stair covering etc.
Be aware of hazards outside of the home too such as uneven pavements, icy surfaces, etc.
Look after your general health?

It is important that you look after your general health and get your blood pressure checked regularly with your doctor or practice nurse.

Are you at risk of developing osteoporosis or do you suffer from this?

Osteoporosis is a common condition where bones have become fragile and weak making then easier to break. There are a number of factors that can put people at greater risk such as:

- women if they've had an early menopause or hysterectomy with removal of both ovaries before the age of 45
- men with low levels of testosterone
- people who have had a broken bone after only a minor fall
- people with a family history of osteoporosis
- people who use corticosteroid tablets (for conditions such as asthma or arthritis)
- people with medical conditions which affect absorption of foods, like Crohn's disease or Coeliac disease
- people who drink heavily
• people who smoke
• women who are underweight or have developed an eating disorder

It is worth discussing osteoporosis the next time you visit your doctor or practice nurse.
For further information, please contact the following falls services:

**Gateshead**
Jubilee Wing
Queen Elizabeth Hospital
Gateshead
Telephone: 0191 445 3817

**South Tyneside**
Perth Green House
Inverness Road
Jarrow
Telephone: 0191 423 4600

**Sunderland**
Galleries Day Unit
Galleries Health Centre
Washington
Telephone: 0191 502 6810

NHS South of Tyne and Wear (serving Gateshead Primary Care Trust, South Tyneside Primary Care Trust and Sunderland Teaching Primary Care Trust) is committed to raising the standard of written information for patients, their carers, people who use the NHS and the general public.

This information can be made available in another format or language on request. Please contact the Communications and PR Team Tel: 0191 529 7118 Email: mopil@sotw.nhs.uk