

Contact Details

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(POLAR) Programme

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An tOspidéal Náisiúnta Athshlánúcháin

Fall Prevention and Management for People with Transfemoral (above-knee) or Knee Disarticulation (through-knee) Amputation



The National Rehabilitation Hospital is accredited by CARF (Commission for accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities) for a range of services, confirming they meet recognized international standards

Falls

Each year one in three people aged 65 and older fall. You can take a step in the right direction to reduce your risk of falling and continue to pursue activities you enjoy with the help of your health care team.

Do you have a high risk of having a fall?

- Older than 65 years.
- Feel dizzy or lightheaded when standing up after lying or sitting
- Are on multiple or certain medications
- Cannot get to the toilet on time
- Feel unsteady when walking
- Have muscle weakness
- Have difficulty with eyesight
- Have a fear of falling and, or a history of falling
- Have a foot problem
- Have certain medical conditions, such as Parkinsons Disease or Stroke
- Consume alcohol
- Engage in high or low levels of activity
- Are in an environment that has hazards, for example, clutter at home.

If you have answered yes to any of the above statements, you have a higher risk of falling.



Things to discuss with your doctor or public health nurse

1. Some medications can affect your vision, or make you dizzy and drowsy—this can affect your balance and judgement. If you are over 65 years of age, your doctor should review your medications every 12 months.

Things to discuss with your doctor or public health nurse (continued)

2. Rushing to the toilet can increase your risk of falling. Get into the habit of going to the toilet more regularly. Talk to your doctor about the side effects of your medications. You may also need a urine bottle or commode if you need to go to the toilet at night. Speak to your public health nurse or occupational therapist.



3. Being able to see and hear the obstacles in your environment is important to reduce your risk of falling. If you need glasses for everyday use, ensure you wear them to improve your awareness of environmental trip hazards. Please contact your optician or GP regarding change with eyesight. Have your eyesight tested regularly. Make sure you wear your hearing aid if prescribed one.

3. Alcohol affects your balance and may interact with your medication. Ask your doctor for advice on alcohol consumption.
4. As you get older you will be at increased risk of bone fragility, and particularly as an amputee. Ensure you discuss your risk with your doctor.

Tips for preventing falls in the home

1. Place items you use frequently within easy reach. Avoid reaching excessively. You may need a kitchen trolley for you to transport items safely. Talk to your occupational therapist.
2. **Footwear:** Wear sensible shoes and slippers that fit well and stay firmly on your feet. Consider wearing shoes with non-slip soles.



3. **Furniture:** Ensure there is adequate space between furniture to walk safely. Ensure passageways between furniture and between rooms are clear of unnecessary items.

4. **Steps and stairs:** Ensure stairs and steps are well lit and bannister rails are used when going up and down steps and stairs. Ensure you place your full foot on the step. Your Occupational Therapist may recommend grab rails, extra bannister rail and, or a stair lift to aid balance when going up and down steps and stairs.
5. **Flooring:** Remove loose mats and rugs. Gaffer tape can be used to secure torn pieces of carpet until you can replace floor coverings. Clean up spills on floor immediately.



6. **Lighting:** Ensure adequate lighting in rooms and passageways during the day and night. Leave the light on (low energy night light) or ensure you have access to a bedside lamp, touch operated light or torch to light your path at night.



7. **Assistive Devices:** mobility aids, grab rails, stair lifts, raised toilet seats, shower and bath seats can be used to aid balance and reduce falls. Ask your Community Occupational Therapist and, or Physiotherapist for advice about equipment needed.



8. **Pets:** Dogs and cats can sneak up behind you when you least expect it. Ensure you check the immediate space around you before stepping back, turning and walking.
9. **Outdoors:** garden paths may be slippery due to rain, moss, snow or ice. Ensure outdoor lighting is adequate. Be mindful of uneven, cracked, sloping pavements.

Other fall prevention tips

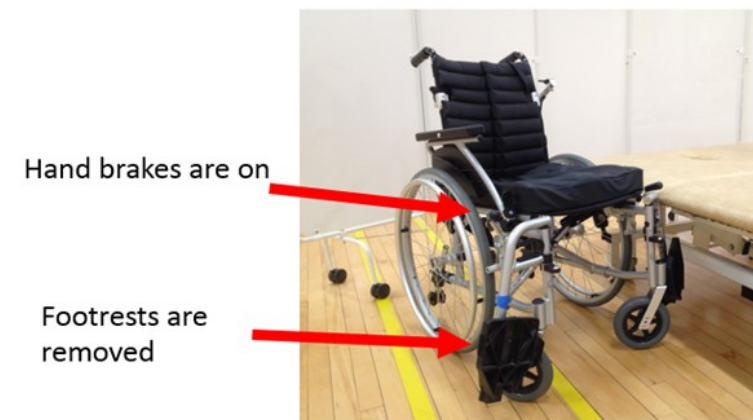
1. Fall Alarms such as pendant alarms – this is a button operated alarm to let you alert someone that you need assistance. You can apply for a pendant alarm through your public health nurse.



2. Easy access to phones - keep a mobile or hands free phone in your pocket. Do not leave the phone out of reach.
3. Use the walking aid given to you. If you are not using one indoors, you might need one when walking outdoors. Make sure all parts of your walking aid are in good condition, particularly the rubber ferrule as seen below.



4. Contact the physiotherapist in your local health centre for advice on repair or replacement of your walking aid.
5. Take extra care when walking in wet, windy and icy conditions outdoors.
6. Walk in a good walking pattern with your artificial leg on. Try not to stoop forward or drag your feet. Make sure the artificial leg is fitting well and comfortably. If in doubt, talk to your prosthetist.
7. Make sure your wheelchair is within easy reach if you are not wearing your prosthesis. Ensure the foot plates are removed and brakes are secured before transferring to prevent a fall. It is also important to make sure your wheelchair is set up correctly. If in doubt, talk to your Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist.



What should you do if you have a fall?

Stay calm and get your breath back. If you have serious injuries, call the emergency service immediately.

If you can't get up from the floor:

1. Try to call for help using your pendent alarm, mobile phone, or to attract attention by shouting. Keep yourself warm by covering yourself with a rug or something to keep you warm while waiting for help.
2. Make yourself comfortable by placing pillow or other clothing items under your head.
3. If you have not had a serious injury, keep moving or rolling to avoid getting a pressure sore.
4. Move away from the wet area if you have had to empty your bladder

If you feel strong enough to get up from the floor, try the following:

1. Getting up on your knees with your artificial leg

Stay calm and rest yourself first. You may want to push yourself up by using your arms in sitting position first.



Roll over onto your unaffected leg. Then use your arms to push yourself onto your hands and your knees. Then crawl to a sturdy object. You will NOT damage the artificial leg when you are leaning on it.



Put your hands on the sturdy object in front of you. Then lean on the artificial leg and put your unaffected leg to the front.



Put your hands on the sturdy object in front of you, then use the unaffected leg to push yourself up into standing.



Tip!

Remember:

- The fall itself may have turned the artificial limb. Make sure you check the comfort in standing.
- You need to have a strong unaffected leg to help you for this technique.
- You may need help during this technique.
- Alert your doctor if you have any serious injuries.

2. Getting up with your artificial leg: sturdy object behind you

Stay calm. Then, crawl to a place where you have a sturdy object for example, a bed or couch, behind you.



Use a footstool, exercise step, or pile of pillows to help you. Put your hands on the step. Then lift your body up onto the step by pushing down on your arms and mainly on your legs.



Put your hands on the sturdy object behind you.

Push up on the object behind you, using your arms and legs again.



Remember:

- You need to have relatively strong muscles and good range in your shoulders and arms for this technique.
- Try this technique if you have a painful knee.
- The impact of fall may have turned the artificial limb. Make sure you check the comfort in standing.
- You may need help during this technique.
- Alert your doctor immediately if you have any injuries.

3. Getting up from the floor without your artificial leg

Stay calm and rest yourself first. Sit up by pushing with your arms. Shuffle your bottom on the floor to a sturdy object near you. Put your hands on the step or footstool.



Lift up your bottom onto the step by pushing with your arms and on your **unaffected** leg. Sit on the step.



Put your hands on the sturdy object behind you. Push up on your hands and your unaffected leg to lift your bottom up onto the sturdy object behind you.



Tip!

Remember:

- You need to have relatively strong muscles and good range in your shoulders and arms for this technique.
- Try this technique if you have a painful knee.
- The impact of fall may have turned the artificial limb. Make sure you check the comfort in standing.
- You may need help during this technique.
- Alert your doctor immediately if you have any injuries.

How do I help someone get up after a fall?

Stay calm. Reassure the person who has fallen and let them rest.

Check for any injuries. If the person has serious injury, he or she needs to stay where they are. Call an ambulance and make the person comfortable.

If the person who has fallen does not have a serious injury and feels they are able to get up, help them using the steps above.

Remember not to lift the person yourself to avoid injury to them, or yourself. Keep your back straight and stay close to the person you are helping. Get help if needed.

Make sure you know how to help safely to avoid injury to yourself and the person who has fallen.

Tell the doctor or other health professionals about the fall.

Tip!

Remember:

- There is no correct or incorrect technique. You can have your own comfortable way that works for you as long as it is safe.
- The impact of a fall can change the set-up of your artificial leg. If your walking is affected after the fall, contact your prosthetic centre to arrange for a check-up.

Lifestyle Changes you can make to improve your health and prevent falls

Exercise to help prevent falls



Regular exercise can improve your balance, coordination and confidence. It can also strengthen your bone and muscles.

Weight bearing exercise (exercise on your feet, for example walking and any activities while you are standing) can also improve your balance.

Muscle strengthening exercise can also reduce the likelihood and the impacts of falling. Contact your local physiotherapist for specific strengthening and balance exercises.

Talk to your doctor if you have medical conditions or severe balance problem before taking up any exercise.

Diet and Bone Health

It is important to have strong and healthy bones to decrease the risk of having fracture during fall.

Having a balanced diet that is rich in vitamins and minerals is important for health. Use the food pyramid to help you to plan a healthy balanced diet.

Calcium and Vitamin D are important for building and maintaining bone strength. Milk, yogurt and cheese are rich sources of calcium. These foods, especially full-fat cheese, can be high in saturated fat - so choose lower fat options regularly. Three servings a day will help meet calcium needs of an adult or child. Teenagers or pregnant women are recommended to increase their intake to five servings per day.



Serving Sizes

1 serving is:	
1 large glass (200ml) or low fat or low fat fortified milk	1 small carton fromage frais
1 large glass (200ml) calcium enriched Soya milk	25g/1oz (matchbox size piece) of low fat cheddar or semi-soft cheese
1 small carton yogurt (125ml)	50g/2oz low fat soft cheese
1 yogurt drink (200ml)	2 processed cheese triangles
1 portion of milk pudding made with low fat milk	75g/3oz cottage cheese

Other sources of calcium include sardines, green vegetables such as spinach and fruits such as dried figs. These sources of calcium can be harder to absorb.

If dairy products need to be avoided, have calcium and vitamin D enriched soya products (if suitable).

Vitamin D helps you absorb calcium better. Foods rich in vitamin D are oily fish, liver, eggs and some breakfast cereals.



A high alcohol intake is not recommended for bone health. It can also increase risk of falls and injury. The Department of Health give guidelines for weekly alcohol limits. The term “standard drink” is used to describe these limits.

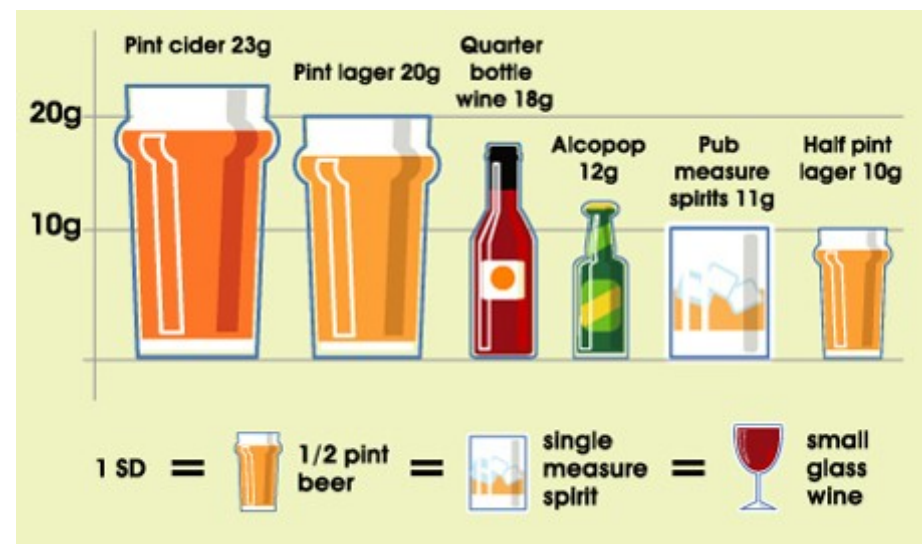
An example of a standard drink is:

½ pint beer, pub measure of spirits, a small glass of wine.

- Men should not consume more than 17 standard drinks spread over a week.
- Women should not consume more than 11 standard drinks spread over a week.

For better health, men and women should aim to consume less than these limits. Alcohol units cannot be consumed together and there should be some alcohol free days.

Ask your doctor about recommendations regarding alcohol.



The Department of Health: Your Guide to Healthy eating using the food pyramid

Useful Contacts & Resources

AgeAction

For more information on Care and Repair Programme

Tel: 01 475 6011

www.ageaction.ie

Alzheimer Society of Ireland

Tel: 01 2073800

Helpline: 1800 341 341

www.alzheimer.ie

Amputee coalition

For more information on falls among people with amputation

www.amputee-coalition.org

Amputee Ireland

For information on support group for amputees in Ireland

www.amputee.ie

Association of Occupational Therapists of Ireland (AOTI)

For information on private occupational therapists

Tel: 01 874 8136

www.aoti.ie

Family Carers

For information on grants for pendant alarm

Tel: 1800 24 07 24 (Freephone)

www.familycarers.ie

Chime

National charity supporting people with deafness and hearing loss

Tel: 01-817 5700

Text: 087- 922 1064

www.chime.ie

Health Service Executive

For information on local health centres, GP, therapy services, fall prevention programme.

www.hse.ie

Irish Osteoporosis Society

For more information on Osteoporosis

Tel: 01-637 5050

www.irishosteoporosis.ie

Irish Society of Chartered Physiotherapists (ISCP)

For information on chartered Physiotherapists

Tel: 01 402 2148

www.iscp.ie

Irish wheelchair Association

For more information on how to increase your activity level and access to gym facilities

Tel: 01 402 2148

www.iwa.ie

National Council for the Blind of Ireland (NCBI)

Tel: 01 830 7033

Lo-call: 1850 923 060

www.ncbi.ie

National Rehabilitation Hospital

Tel: 01 235 5000

www.nrh.ie

Acknowledgement

We would like to thank the volunteers who took part in compiling this fall prevention leaflet.

Also, thank you to the dietetic service, physiotherapy and occupational therapy services for their contribution to this leaflet.

Thanks to the rest of the team in the Prosthetics, Orthotics, and Limb Absence Rehabilitation in the NRH for their review of this leaflet.