

# A Guide to Reducing the Risk of Falls due to Medication in Older People

**Certain medicines can sometimes cause dizziness or drowsiness and, along with other factors, contribute to the risk of falling over. It is important that these medicines are regularly reviewed to minimise the risk of harm.**

## **Keep Track of Your Medicines**

- ⇒ Keep an **up to date** list of all the medicines you are taking (including those prescribed AND bought over the counter) and carry it with you in your wallet or purse.
- ⇒ Keep your medicines in the packaging labelled by the pharmacist.
- ⇒ Ask your pharmacist for help if you cannot manage to remove them from the containers.

## **Review Your Medicines**

- ⇒ Certain medicines can sometimes cause dizziness or drowsiness and contribute to the risk of falling, especially if taken together.
- ⇒ Have a medication review with a healthcare professional (e.g. pharmacist, nurse or GP) at least once a year to ensure they are still having the desired effect on your health. Check your review date with your GP practice.
- ⇒ Your pharmacist can give advice and explain your medication.
- ⇒ If you have an urgent problem with your medicines, contact your pharmacist or doctor to discuss.

## **Key Points to Reduce Risk of Falls**

- ⇒ Check the best time of day to take new medicines.
- ⇒ Some medicines, especially if taken together, can make you feel drowsy, light-headed, faint or unsteady on your feet. This may happen when you first start to take them and may not last for long.
- ⇒ Some medicines may make you feel confused or lead to changes in your vision making it harder to clearly see your surroundings.
- ⇒ Alcohol with some medications can also increase your risk of falls.
- ⇒ If you do not recognise your medicine, check with your pharmacist.
- ⇒ Always take your prescribed medicine as instructed on the label.
- ⇒ Do not change or stop any medication without talking to your doctor.
- ⇒ Consider switching to de-cafeinated drinks.
- ⇒ Speak to a healthcare professional about maintaining good bone and muscle health.

# Types of Medicines and Associated Risk of Falls in Older People

Please note – this is just a guide and there may be other medicines not included in this list which also may increase the risk of falling.

For more falls prevention information see: <http://www.ageuk.org.uk> and search “Staying Steady ” and Information for the public | Falls: assessment and prevention in older people and in people 50 and over at [higher risk](#) | [Guidance](#) | [NICE](#)

Medicines for:	Possible problems which may increase risk of falling:
Blood pressure	Drowsiness and/or dizziness when getting up from sitting or lying. Always take your time standing up from a sitting or lying position.
Heart conditions	Dizziness when getting up from sitting or lying. Always take your time standing up from a sitting or lying position.
Water retention	Dizziness or urgency to go to toilet.
Urine incontinence	May cause blurred vision, drowsiness or confusion.
Depression, anxiety, sleep problems	May cause drowsiness, confusion or slowing of reactions.
Other mental health conditions	Drowsiness, dizziness, blurred vision or stiff muscles.
Epilepsy	May cause drowsiness, confusion or slowing of reactions.
Pain	Strong pain killers may cause slowing of reactions, impaired balance, drowsiness or confusion.
Blood sugar control	If blood sugar is too low you may become confused, weak or light-headed.
Allergy / cold remedies	May cause drowsiness, blurred vision or confusion.
Other: Caffeine	Caffeine impacts the bladder and bowel and increases the urgency of using the toilet. This may be a contributing factor to falls. Consider de-caffeinated drinks.

If you are experiencing any of the problems listed above or if you are worried about your medications and/or your risk of falling, please contact your pharmacist or GP Practice to discuss.