

Older People's friendly tips for staying safe, preventing falls, and keeping well throughout the Winter and Christmas season.

Home & Environment Safety

1. Improve lighting

- Always turn on lights before moving around your home during the evening and night. Low energy light bulbs are good for saving energy and money.
- Ensure you have adequate outdoor lighting. Sensor lights are good especially when returning home on a dark evening.

2. Remove tripping hazards

- Tape down loose rugs or remove them entirely.
- Keep passageways clear of gifts, decorations, extension cords, and clutter.
- After hosting visitors, double-check that furniture hasn't been moved into walking areas.

3. Winter-proof entryways

- Ask someone to salt/grit icy paths and steps.
- Consider handrails on both sides of outdoor steps.

4. Foot Health

- Attending podiatry appointments is important to ensure good foot health, prevent/avoid pain or unwanted issues which could alter your walking pattern and lead to a fall.
- Wear a pair of comfortable non-slip shoes even indoors (avoid slippers that are loose or floppy). Laced or Velcro shoes are recommended as people's feet can swell during the day and these types of shoe can be loosened.
- Make sure outdoor shoes have good tread.

5. Eyesight

- Put glasses on before getting up from bed during the night after turning your bedside light on.
- It's important to attend your optometrist appointments for sight and eye health.

Christmas Tips

6. Avoid overreaching when decorating

- Don't climb on stools or chairs to hang decorations.

- Ask family, neighbours, or community volunteers for help.
- Keep decorations at a reachable height.

7. Manage cords safely

- Christmas lights often bring extra wires—tape them against walls or use cable clips/covers to prevent tripping.

8. Pace yourself

- Holiday cooking, hosting, or shopping can be tiring.
- Take breaks, stay hydrated, and avoid rushing (many falls happen when people hurry).

9. Safe gift handling

- Don't lift heavy packages alone.
- Wrap presents somewhere you can sit comfortably and avoid bending for long periods.

Winter Weather Safety

10. Stay warm

- Wear layers, including hats and gloves.
- Keep rooms at a safe temperature (around 21°C).
- A warm body maintains better balance, reduces stiffness and prevents falls.
- Replace electric blankets at least every 10 years. Unplug when not in use. Be vigilant of any signs of wear and tear and always store flat or loosely roll when not in use.
- Do not use boiling water in hot water bottles and don't overfill. Remember hot water bottles have a sale by date and should be replaced every 2 years.
- Place portable heaters where they cannot cause a trip or fall and never plug it into an extension lead.

11. Prevent slips outdoors

- Test the ground with your foot before stepping out.
- Only go outside if necessary and use a walking aid with an ice grip.
- Carry a mobile phone when you go out in case of emergencies.
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12. Plan outings during daylight

- Icy conditions and poor visibility make falls more likely in the early morning or evenings.

Health & Mobility Tips

13. Keep moving

- Gentle daily stretching keeps muscles strong and reduces fall risks.
- Chair exercises, short indoor walks, or physiotherapy routines can help.

14. Review medications

- Some medicines can cause dizziness or drowsiness—important to check with a GP or pharmacist.
- Have your medications reviewed by your Doctor or Pharmacist regularly.

15. Get vision & hearing checks

- Reduced vision or hearing can increase the chance of accidents like Falls.

16. Use mobility aids properly

- Ensure walking sticks, frames, or grab rails are in good condition and fitted correctly. Remember to replace the rubber tips (Ferrules) if they are worn down as this can cause a slip.
- Don't be shy about using them indoors if winter makes joints stiffer.

17. Alcohol

- Do your best to avoid alcohol.
- Alcohol can increase your risk of falling over and causing injury.
- It can cause loss of co-ordination and memory
- Alcohol can interact with certain medication to cause unwanted side effects, and can stop some medications working effectively.

Social & Emergency Preparedness

18. Keep in touch

- Let family or neighbours know if you're going out in bad weather.
- Set up a check-in system during cold or icy spells – Good Morning Call Scheme's can provide a free service.

19. Emergency items

- Keep a charged mobile phone nearby and charged up.
- Have a torch, warm blankets, and extra batteries available in case of winter power cuts.

For further information please contact the Home Safety Team on 0300 013 3333 or email: homesafety@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk