



healthcare™

# Falls Prevention Strategies

INFORMATION BOOKLET



Gosford  
Private Hospital





# Contents

- 1** Facts about falls
- 2** What can cause a fall?
- 2** Hazards inside the home
  - 3** Lounge room
  - 4** Bedroom
  - 5** Bathroom
  - 5** Toilet
  - 5** Kitchen
  - 7** Laundry
- 8** Hazards outside the home
  - 10** Hazards in the community
  - 11** Footwear and clothing
  - 12** Medications
  - 13** Vision
  - 14** Still at risk of falling?
- 14** What to do if you fall





# Facts about falls

- 30% of people aged 65 years and over fall each year
- The risk of falling increases as you age
- More than 1 in 3 community dwelling people aged 65 years and over fall annually
- The most common cause of fall related injury for those 65 years and older is from "Slipping, tripping and stumbling on level ground"
- After falling nearly 50% of older people report a fear of falling and 25% will reduce activities
- Three quarters of all injury hospitalisation for people 65 years and over are as a result of a fall

## Definition of a fall:

*A fall is an event which results in a person coming to rest inadvertently on the ground, floor or other lower level.*

## This is why we take falls so seriously!

FACT

### With age:

- Muscles weaken
- Lose joint flexibility
- Vision can deteriorate

FACT

### With physical activity you can achieve:

- Better balance
- Improved co-ordination
- Greater muscle strength and tone
- Improved joint stability
- Better mobility, helping reduce the risk of falling





# What can cause a fall?

- Hazards inside the home
- Hazards in the garden
- Hazards in the community
- Footwear and Clothing
- Medication
- Vision

## Hazards inside the home

- Lounge room
- Bedroom
- Bathroom
- Toilet
- Kitchen
- Laundry





# Lounge room

## Loose mats

- Ideally should be removed

## Electrical or telephone cords

- Remove or tape to skirting at edge of room

## Low and inappropriate furniture

- Use a taller supportive chair with arms

## Pets

- Be aware where your pet is before getting up to avoid having them underfoot



Cluttered and difficult to access



Rearranged for increased access





# Bedroom

## Long trailing bed covers can pose a trip hazard

- Use a doona instead of a bedspread

## Light switches that are difficult to reach

- Do not get up in the dark
- Bedside touch lamp

## Clutter

- Remove as much out of the room as possible

## Reaching into the wardrobe can cause overbalancing

- Store things between shoulder and waist height

## If you have difficulty getting in/out of bed

- Try a bed rail or bed stick
- Bed blocks may assist if your bed is low

## Getting up to go to the toilet at night

- Urinal bottle
- Bedside commode
- Contenance pads



Bed rail



Bed stick



Beside commode





# Bathroom

## Stepping over the shower hob

- Grab rail and/or transfer bench

## Slippery wet floors

- Non-slip floor treatment

## Tile lips into bathroom

- Consider wedges

## Steam (light headed)

- Ventilation
- Reduce steam by keeping water temperature warm rather than hot

## Losing balance in the shower

- Non-slip floor treatment
- Shower stool
- Grab rails
- Bath/shower transfer bench
- Bath board



Transfer bench



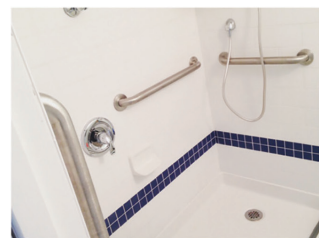
Bath board



Shower chair



Shower stool



Grab rails





## Bath board transfer



Step one



Step two



Step three

## Toilet

### Low toilet seat height

- Toilet aids can assist with safe transfers



Toilet surround



Raised toilet seat



Over toilet aid seat

## Kitchen

### Climbing on a chair or step ladder to reach into cupboards

- Store items between shoulder and waist height

### Carrying hot food and drink

- Tray mobile

### Slippery floors

- Wipe up spills immediately with a mop

### Torn or uneven flooring

- Keep in good repair







# Laundry

## Difficult access to clothes line

- Consider relocating line or modifying the footpath

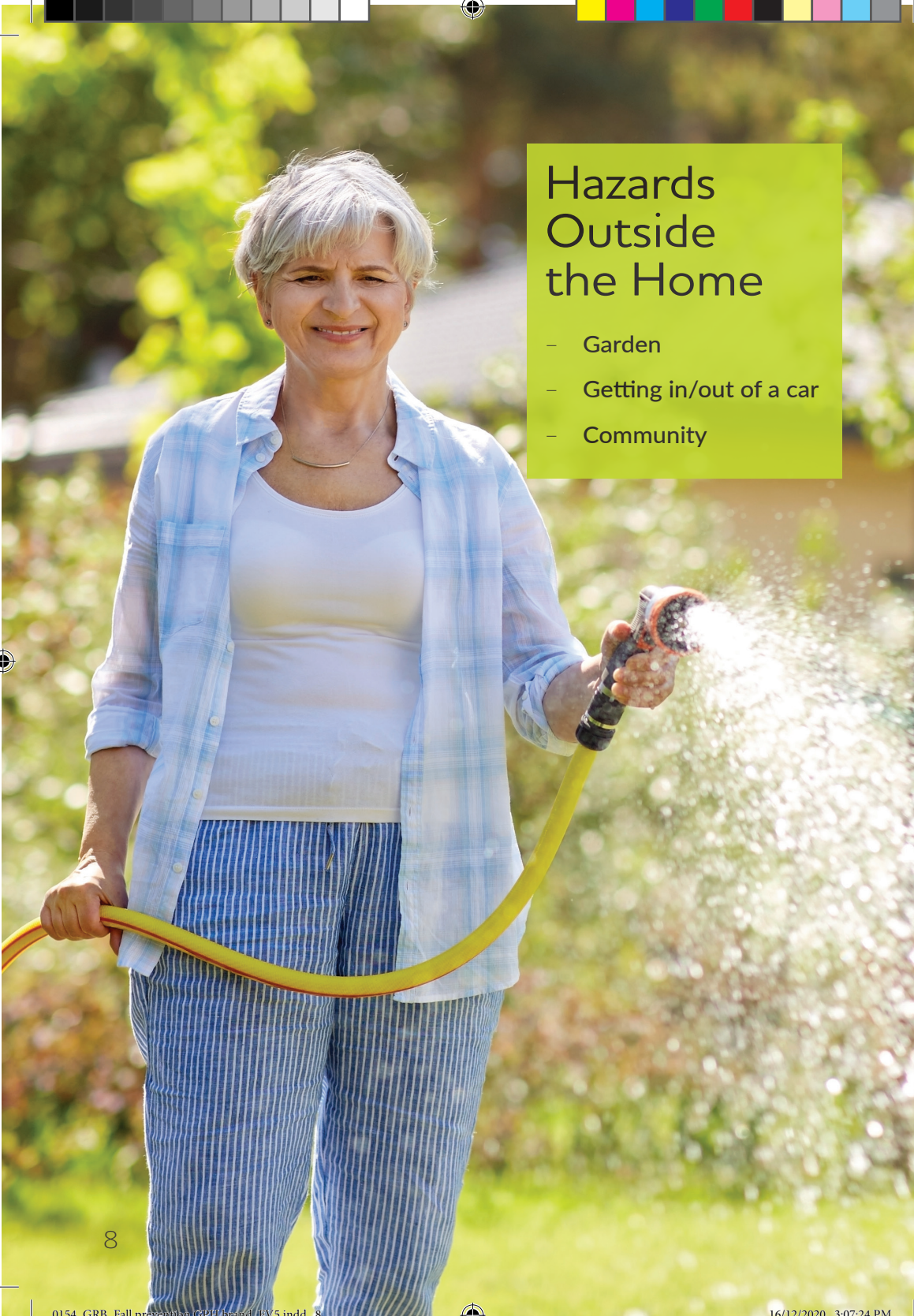
## Reaching above head to the clothes line puts you at great risk of falls

- Use a drier or clothes horse
- Lower clothes line

## Carrying basket of wet heavy washing

- Do small loads
- Use a laundry trolley
- Even level and clear access to the line is ideal





## Hazards Outside the Home

- Garden
- Getting in/out of a car
- Community





## Garden

- Unwound hose
- Climbing ladders
- Mossy and leafy paths and driveway
- Tools left on the ground
- Bending down to tend to garden

## Getting into a car technique

- Push seat right back
- Back up to car door entry
- Bottom in first
- Slide bottom back into seat
- Swivel legs into the car

## Getting out of a car

- Assistive devices
  - Swivel seat/pad
  - Plastics bag or slide sheet
  - Handy bar (pictured)





# Hazards in the community

- Uneven or slippery footpaths
- Steps without handrails
- Tree roots
- Low hanging branches
- Cars parked on footpath
- Weather (wind/rain)
- Crowds
- Slippery flooring in shopping centres



With physical activity you can achieve improved co-ordination





# Footwear and clothing

## Loose fitting slippers or shoes

- Wear supportive shoes with backs such as lace ups or velcro
- Avoid slides or thongs
- Wear shoes that have non-slip grip



## High heels

- Best to wear low heeled shoes

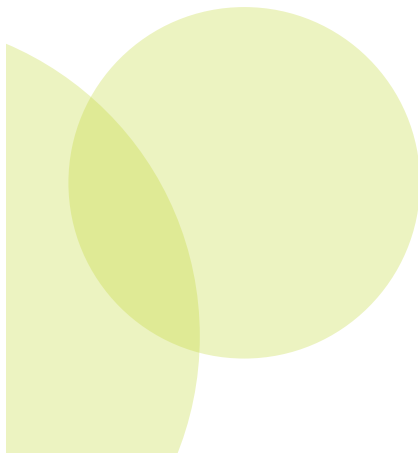
## Difficulty reaching feet

- Long handled shoe horn
- Elastic shoelaces
- Sock gutter
- Reacher



## Clothes that catch

- Avoid clothes that have floppy pockets or sleeves
- Make sure skirts and trousers are appropriate length





# Medications

## Risks

- Medications that cause dizziness
- Over the counter medications can clash with prescribed medications
- Other peoples medications
- Out of date medications
- Incorrect dosage.  
Try a Webster pack or Doset box



# Vision

## Incorrect glasses prescription

- Regular eye tests

## Difficulty judging distance and depth

- Contrast on steps

## Poor lighting

- Night light in bedroom and hallway
- Sensor light at front door

## Glare

- Wear sunglasses and/or hat to reduce glare

## Sudden changes in light

- Allow your eyes to adjust when going from light to dark and vice versa



# Still at risk of falling?

## Personal Response System

- Eg. Vital Call, Live Life alarms, GPS watch
- Keep telephone within reach from floor or carry a mobile phone



## Hip Protectors (Pictured)

# What to do if you fall



Don't panic.

Check yourself for injuries.

Use personal response system if you have one.



If able turn onto your hands and knees and crawl to a solid chair. Shuffle on your bottom to a chair if unable to crawl.

Reach a telephone to call for help.



Use the chair to pull yourself up if safe to do so.

Contact your GP to discuss the fall.











## References

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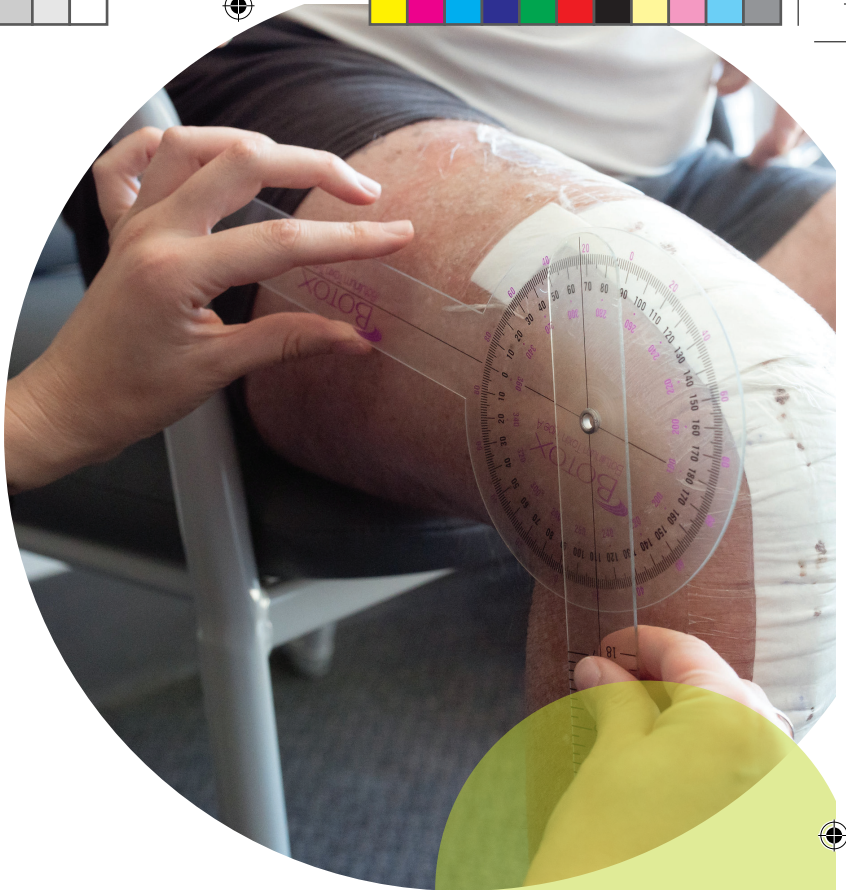
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### **Don't fall for it. Falls can be prevented! - A guide to preventing falls for older people.**

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