

**LIVE STRONGER
FOR LONGER**

PREVENT FALLS & FRACTURES



**LOVE YOUR
INDEPENDENCE**



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INTRODUCTION

Falling over isn't part of the ageing process. Many falls are preventable, and we want to help you stay on your feet and living the life you want to live.

This booklet provides practical advice – whether you're still working, newly retired, or happily enjoying a long retirement – there is something in here for everyone. As you will see, much of the advice is good, old-fashioned common sense, but for those of you who have spent a lifetime looking after others (and perhaps still do) this guide is a gentle reminder to look after yourself.

In this booklet we will discuss:

Retirement – one size does not fit all

Health and wellbeing

Home safety (most falls happen in the home)

How to ask for help

Planning ahead

For even more information go to our website

www.livestronger.org.nz

or visit:

www.acc.co.nz

www.health.govt.nz

www.hqsc.govt.nz



RETIREMENT

One size does not fit all

One of the things we hear a lot is over 65s just don't relate to the advice they receive about growing old. They don't feel old, and they certainly don't feel at risk of a fall. But current data shows us that each year, one in three people aged 65 or over will fall. For people aged 80 and over, the risk increases to one in two.

The fact is; when it comes to retirement one size does not fit all.

In 2016 the New Zealand Commission for Financial Capability developed a framework for looking at retirement. They determined that New Zealanders can expect to enjoy between 20 – 30 years of leisure time once we finish working, spread over three distinct stages.

We've followed their framework and added our own falls-related focus. Much of the advice we've provided in this booklet is aimed towards people in or around the second stage of retirement. If you don't relate to the advice now, have a quick read – you may have an older relative who could do with some help, or need it yourself someday.



“ **LEILA, WAIHEKE ISLAND,
AGED 72**

When I was a young woman, I thought 70 was really old. Now I'm 72... and it's not old at all!

3 stages of retirement

1 The 'Discovery' stage

This first or early stage of retirement will, for many, be the 'doing' years. The time to have a go at all the things you've said you'd get around to someday.

You may still be working and enjoy a broad range of social and physical activities like swimming, hiking or yoga, and you get a lot of satisfaction from your pursuits. You find it annoying to be stereotyped, particularly when it comes to your physical and mental abilities.

2 The 'Endeavour' stage

The second stage of retirement may be more about consolidation, a time to choose fun things, relearn old skills, explore fresh talents and grow new friendships.

You're more careful about physical pursuits, and you do worry about getting injured as it's taking longer to recover from the minor bumps and bruises life sends your way. You are happy to avoid obstacles such as inconvenient car parking, and steep hills.

You may have had a fall, or have started finding it harder to get out of low chairs without using your hands to help you up, or may feel unsteady when you first stand up.

3 The 'Reflection' stage

As this third stage is a time when health and finances may limit choice, it's a time to accept help graciously, to make the most of all those memories and to keep up with old friends because you hold each other's history.

You have a lot of value to add to the lives of those around you, and maintaining your independence is vitally important to you, and them.

FEAR OF FALLING

People can worry so much about falling that they restrict their activity. Eventually they move less, their strength decreases, their balance is affected and their risk of falling increases.

So, don't wrap yourself in cotton wool. Stay active, stay safe and don't give in to the fear of falling. The more you do the more you can do.

Have a fall

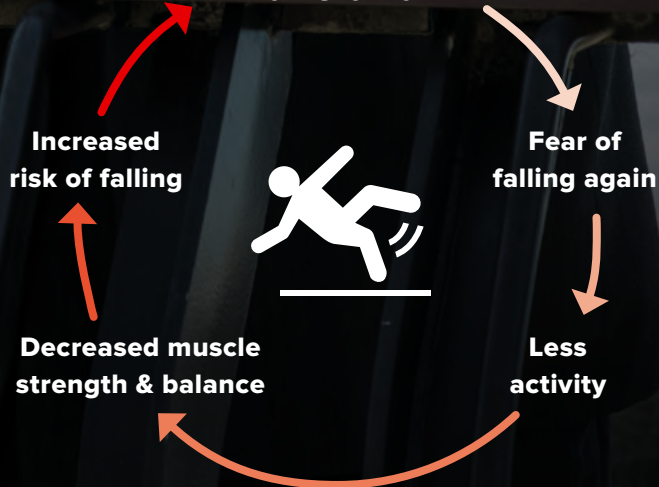
Increased risk of falling

Fear of falling again



Decreased muscle strength & balance

Less activity



YOUR HEALTH

It's tempting to put off a trip to the doctor, but some things you just have to do. To maintain your health and independence:

Have regular check-ups. Some medical conditions and medications can increase the risk of falling. You may not need all the medications that were prescribed for you when younger.



Speak up

Discuss any changes in your health as soon as you notice them. Sometimes the causes of dizziness, confusion or memory loss (all contributing factors to falls) can be treated easily.

Ask your doctor if a Vitamin D supplement is right for you. The main source of Vitamin D is through direct sunlight on uncovered skin. If you do not spend regular time in direct sunlight, taking a Vitamin D supplement can help maintain bone health, improve muscle function and may reduce your risk of falling.

Ask your doctor, physio or practice nurse to give you a Timed up and Go (TUG) Test. This is a simple test to gauge your muscle strength and balance.

Healthy bones

For many, broken bones are a painful (and very inconvenient) outcome of a fall. However, if you've broken a bone after a seemingly minor injury, then you may need to talk to your doctor about osteoporosis.

Despite popular belief, osteoporosis is not a 'disease'; it's a slow 'symptom-free' deterioration in the structure of the bone tissue which leads to an increased risk of fracture.

The great news is, it's never too late to improve your bone health. There are lifestyle changes that can improve bone

health, as well as safe and effective treatments that can prevent fractures. Simple things like increasing exercise, maintaining a healthy weight, reducing alcohol consumption, and cutting out smoking can all improve your chances of a fracture-free retirement.

If you have a family history of osteoporosis, or are over 50 and have broken a bone after a minor bump or fall, talk to your doctor about your risk of osteoporosis, you may benefit from treatment that can prevent another fracture.

Love your bones and keep yourself safe.

Osteoporosis risk factors

- 65 years or over
- Have broken a bone after a seemingly minor injury
- Family history of osteoporosis
- Low body weight
- Taking medications that can reduce bone health
- Low levels of physical activity
- Smoking
- Excessive alcohol intake

Osteoporosis can be detected by a simple test that can be arranged by your doctor.

For more information visit
www.osteoporosis.org.nz

TUG TEST

The Timed Up and Go (TUG) Test is a simple test to assess muscle strength and balance. You don't need any special footwear – your everyday shoes are fine, and you can use a walking aid if that's how you normally get around.

What it involves

You begin by sitting normally in a chair. You then stand, walk three metres (10 feet), turn around, walk back to the chair and sit down again.

Someone with a stopwatch will need to time how long it takes you to complete. Based on those results your doctor or health professional will make a recommendation on any fall prevention measures to put in place.

TUG tests may also be carried out by exercise instructors to help them identify the right exercises to prescribe and whether they are having a positive effect.



YOUR BODY

Love your body –
you've been through
a lot together. Look
after yourself and live
stronger for longer.

Feet

As we age our feet can change shape or lose some feeling. However, having painful feet is not part of the normal ageing process.

- Wash your feet often to help prevent infections.
- Dry your feet thoroughly especially between the toes.
- Keep your toenails short – get some help if you need it.
- Keep your feet warm, but avoid socks or tights which restrict your circulation.
- See a podiatrist or health professional if your feet are painful or swollen, or if you develop problems like bunions.
- Choose well-fitting flat shoes with non-slip soles.
- Tell your podiatrist or health professional if you have altered or loss of sensation in your feet.



Eyesight

As we age our eyesight can change too. Judging distances and depth gets harder, and glare and changes in light can play havoc with our eyesight. Make it easier on yourself:

- Get your eyes checked by a doctor once a year, and an optometrist at least once every two years. But if you notice a change, see your doctor or optometrist straight away.
- Keep your glasses clean, and always wear the right prescription.
- Give yourself time to get used to new glasses – especially bifocals. Bifocals can make it especially difficult to judge where to put your feet on steps and stairs.
- Wear a hat and sunglasses on sunny days.
- If the light changes suddenly, stop and give your eyes time to adjust before moving on.
- Eat lots of fruit and veges to maintain good eye health.

Hearing

Hearing loss is normal, but it's also gradual so you might not notice the change straight away.

If the TV is turned up very loud but it sounds perfectly normal to you, or, if you struggle to follow group conversations, you should get your hearing tested.

Problems with ears can cause dizziness and affect your balance. The longer you leave it, the less effective treatments can be.

The Ministry of Health supports a range of Hearing and Vision Services. Go to their website for further information www.health.govt.nz

“ LISA, 44, WELLINGTON

My father in-law had a problem with his hearing but he ignored it and by the time he got help, it was almost too late. Without a hearing aid he can't hear a thing.

Bladder control

People of all ages can experience bladder or bowel control problems so don't be embarrassed to discuss it with your doctor or health professional. Every time you make a mad-dash to the bathroom, you put yourself at risk of tripping and falling.

If you are having issues, also make sure you:

- Drink normally as cutting down on liquids usually makes urinary incontinence worse, not better.
- Tea, coffee and some fizzy drinks contain caffeine. If you notice they make you go to the toilet more, cut down or try decaffeinated versions.
- Ask your doctor whether any medicines you're taking could be affecting your bowels and bladder.



Healthy eating

Getting plenty of nutrients and vitamins is essential as you get older. Include a good range of foods in your diet like wholegrain cereals, milk and cheese for calcium, and five portions of fruit or vegetables each day. And don't forget; frozen veges are just as good as fresh (and more convenient).

Keeping your fluids up, especially on warm days, is just as important as eating well. Keep a glass of water within reach during the day as a reminder.

If you're worried about your weight or appetite, speak to your doctor.

Alcohol

As we get older, we become more sensitive to alcohol's effects.

It can make some medicines stronger or weaker or make their side-effects worse.

Drinking too much can cause health problems, or make existing health problems like diabetes and mental health problems, worse.

Many people need to cut down how much alcohol they are drinking when they get older. Others need to stop drinking altogether.

USE IT OR LOSE IT!



Regular exercise is one of the best things you can do for yourself, be it walking, swimming or light exercises at home. It can help you build up your leg and core strength, which in turn will improve your balance and reduce your risk of a fall. It can also:

- Keep your bones strong
- Give you more energy
- Help you sleep better
- Get you out and about
- Help control blood pressure, blood sugar levels and weight.

Oh, and it can make you feel good about yourself too.

Community group strength and balance

One of the ways we're helping New Zealanders to live stronger for longer is by supporting the development of community group strength and balance exercise classes throughout New Zealand.

Clinical research has shown that when people do exercises to strengthen their leg and core muscles, their balance improves and their risk of falls reduces by almost a third.

What will the classes involve?

Classes will be developed to suit the needs of the communities they serve. Some communities may like dance classes to music; some may like to exercise in a quiet space, while others may carry out classes in a variety of styles or languages to suit members.



Will I have to wear lycra or specialty clothing to join?

No, unless you want to of course! Classes will be run by people in your community for the people in your community.

Comfortable clothes that you can move in, and flat, comfortable shoes should be the only pre-requisite.

Will I keep up?

Each class will be required to incorporate exercises that reduce falls, fractures and hip fractures, and meet a set of nine assessment criteria. Once a class can do these things they will then be entitled to carry a Community Group Strength and Balance endorsement 'tick'.

So, don't worry about keeping up – although these classes may make you breathe a little harder, they won't involve any exercises that could do you harm.

Who can attend a class?

All New Zealanders who are 65+ and at risk of falling, or have a history of falling, should give it a go.

How do I find a class?

Each region will have a range of classes to attend. Have a chat with your health professional to find a class, keep an eye out for posters advertising classes, or ask people in your community.

How do I know if I'm 'at risk' of a fall?

If you have slipped, tripped or fallen in the last year, cannot get out of a chair without using your hands, or have avoided activities because you're afraid you might lose your balance, then you could be at risk of a fall.

If you're unsure, talk to your doctor or health professional.

In-home strength and balance

If you have had a fall or are at risk of a fall but can't attend community group strength and balance classes because of your physical limitations, you may be eligible for in-home strength and balance support.

Talk to your doctor or health professional to find out if you're eligible.

PICK THE 'TICK'

Only providers who meet our nine assessment criteria for community group strength and balance, or in-home strength and balance programmes, will be eligible to use our quality mark. Look for the tick when selecting a class to know that it meets nationally agreed standards.

A national Technical Advisory Group established these criteria for community and in-home strength and balance programmes for older people. These criteria are supported by research and evidence, which can be provided on request.





PLAN AHEAD

Falls happen (obviously) when they're least expected. But there are a few simple things you can do to prepare:

- Have your telephone within easy reach, even from the floor.
- Leave a spare key in a secure place outside or with someone you trust so they can let themselves in if needed.
- Get a personal medical alarm.

Discuss your plans with friends, family or neighbours.

**“ GREY POWER MEMBER,
WELLINGTON**

I always take my mobile phone into the garden with me. If I don't have a pocket, I just pop it under my bra-strap up near my shoulder... if you trip over and your phone is on the other side of the garden, what's the point in taking it out there in the first place?

Practice getting up by yourself

It may have been some time since you've tried getting down on the floor and back up again. Give it a go so you're confident about getting up by yourself if you ever take a fall. Just make sure there is someone there with you when you do it.

Rest at any time you need to, and pace yourself so you don't run out of steam. If you don't succeed, rest and try again.

Here's what to do

Look around for a sturdy piece of furniture, bend your knees and roll onto your side



Push yourself up to the side sitting position, then into the four point kneeling position



Grab the chair with your hands for support, push yourself up and pivot to sit on the chair



If you fall

- Stay calm.
- Decide whether you'll try to get up.
- Use the method illustrated on page 21.
- If you don't succeed the first time, have a rest and try again.
- If you do manage to get up on your own, get medical help straight away if you need it, and tell your doctor or health professional about the fall the next time you visit.
- If you can't get up, try to get to the phone or call out to attract attention, and then make yourself as comfortable as possible until help arrives.

Never be afraid or embarrassed to dial 111 in an emergency. The person at the end of the phone is there to look after you, and trained to help you.

Personal Alarms

If you have a personal alarm, wear it at all times, especially at night. Low-lighting, and rushing to the bathroom are both contributing factors in falls at night.

A number of people we've talked to have fallen, but not activated their alarms for fear of being thought of as a nuisance. Our advice is; if you're unable to get to a phone or call for help, you must set off your alarm. The people at the other end won't think you're a nuisance at all, and your family will be relieved to know help was at hand when you needed it.




HOME SAFETY CHECKLIST

You don't need to wrap yourself in cotton wool to reduce your risk of a fall, but you can make your home safer with a few adjustments

Rugs

As lovely as they are, rugs (a.k.a one of the deadliest trip hazards in a home) should be banned. We're joking of course (not really), but please take a moment to check your rugs:

Issue	Action	To-do list 
If your rugs slip around when you walk over them (even just a little bit):	Anchor them in place with anti-slip mats.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
If your rugs are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frayed at the edges • Rolled at the corners • Wrinkled or lumpy in the middle – 	Repair, donate or replace them. As attached as you may be to your rugs, they will trip you up eventually.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>




Ladders

If you use a ladder around the house make sure it has no missing, broken or loose parts – it's just not worth the risk.


If you are buying a ladder, look for the standards approved label (AS/NZS 1892.1:1996). Also read the instructions before you use it.

Bathroom

Issue	Action	To-do list 
To avoid slips and falls in the bathroom:	Always use a bathmat. Use a non-slip mat in the shower or bath if you need it.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
If you can't get on and off the toilet easily, or If you can't get in and out of the bath or shower without holding on to towel rails or taps:	Install sturdy, well-placed hand rails around your bathroom.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
If you feel unsteady or uncomfortable standing to shower –	Use a bath-seat and handheld shower head.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
If your mirror is mounted over a hand-basin or ledge and leaning makes you feel unsteady:	Get a pull out mirror so you don't have to lean into it.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>




Bedrooms

Issue	Action	To-do list 
If your balance is a bit off in the mornings:	Take your time getting out of bed. Roll onto your side, sit up slowly, and then stand. Don't attempt to walk until you're good and ready. Try sitting down to get dressed.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Other tips in the bedroom	Take your time making the bed. Pull on one layer at a time to avoid back strain. You should be able to touch the floor when sitting on the side of the bed. If you can't do this, look at ways to adjust your bed height. Install a bedside lamp that you can easily reach from bed. Keep all bedrooms clutter free.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>




Kitchen

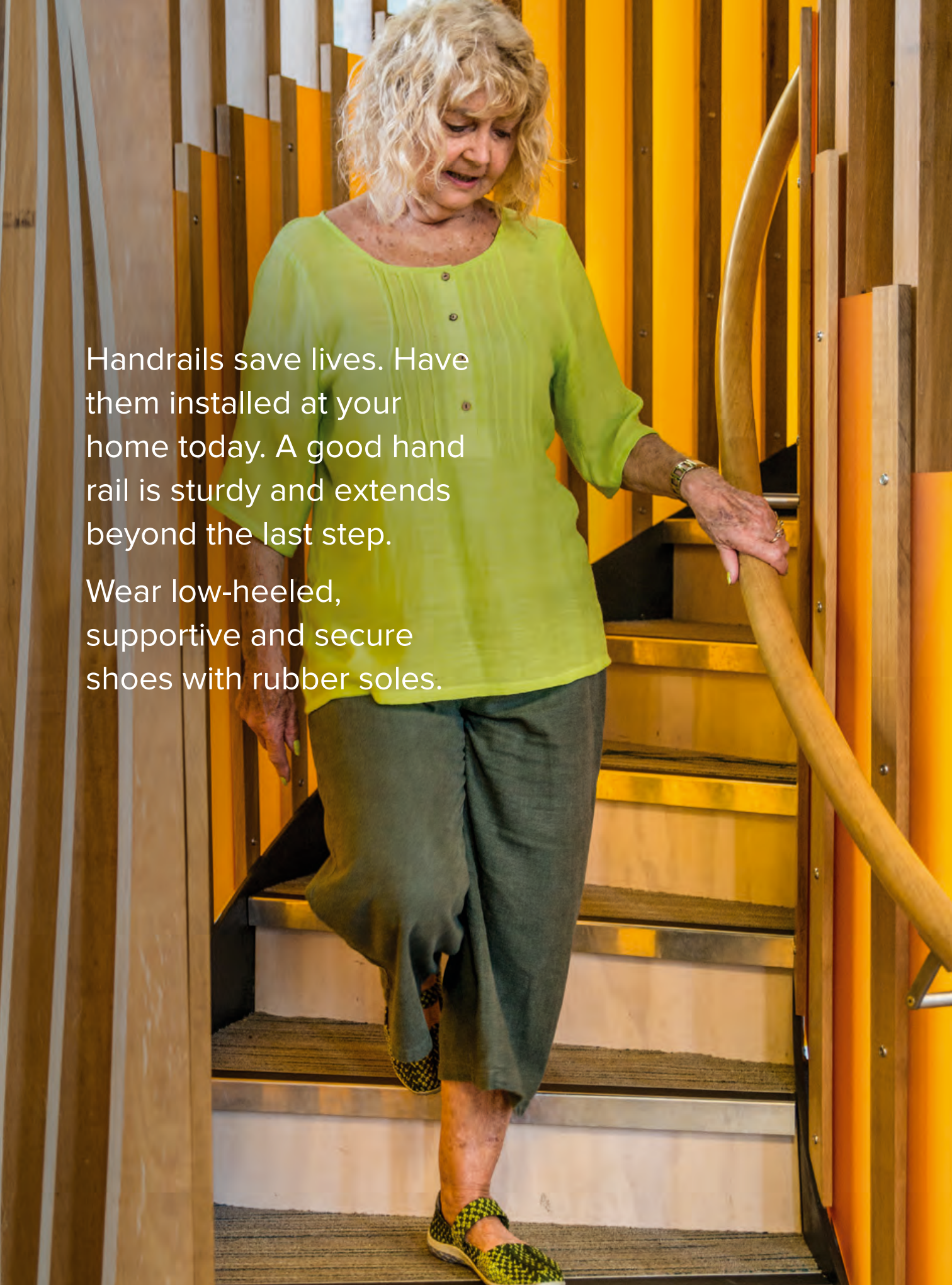
Issue	Action	To-do list 
<p>If you want to stay injury free, make your kitchen work for you.</p>	<p>Put the things you use every day at easy reach so you're not constantly bending and reaching.</p> <p>Try using a hand reacher.</p> <p>Use a sturdy and safe step-ladder if you need to get things from high places.</p> <p>When moving dishes in and out of the oven or dishwasher, sit or stand at the side, rather than leaning forward over the door.</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>





Living


Issue	Action	To-do list 
If you can't walk through your house without bumping into things:	Remove furniture or items you don't need. Downsize large pieces to create more clear space. De-clutter papers and other unnecessary items.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
If you can't reach your telephone comfortably from your chair:	Get a cordless phone. Keep your cell phone charged and close by at all times.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
If electrical cords are running across your walk-ways:	Tuck electrical cords under furniture or close to the wall and tape them down. If possible, reposition your appliances, or change the room layout (ask for help if your furniture is heavy).	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>



Handrails save lives. Have them installed at your home today. A good hand rail is sturdy and extends beyond the last step.

Wear low-heeled, supportive and secure shoes with rubber soles.


Outside

Issue	Action	To-do list 
<p>Gardening is a great way to stay fit and get regular doses of Vitamin D.</p>	<p>Avoid heavy lifting – break the load up into smaller parcels.</p>	<hr/> <hr/>
	<p>Use long-handled and lightweight tools to avoid bending over for long periods.</p>	<hr/> <hr/>
	<p>Use well maintained tools and step-ladders.</p>	<hr/> <hr/>
	<p>Don't get into a tug of war with stubborn weeds (get the buggers some other way!).</p>	<hr/> <hr/>
	<p>Steady yourself when bending and standing.</p>	<hr/> <hr/>
	<p>Ask for help if you need it.</p>	<hr/>
<p>In winter</p>	<p>If your paths ice up in winter, make sure you apply salt or sand to them, and always use a handrail.</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Gardening is a great way to stay fit and get regular doses of Vitamin D.



Personal safety

Issue	Action	To-do list	
Be safe at all times:	Wear well fitting, flat shoes with non-slip soles for increased stability.	_____	
	Wear well fitting slippers with non-slip soles.	_____	
	Avoid walking around the house in socks or stockings.	_____	
	Get your vision checked regularly.	_____	
	Maintain regular check ups with your doctor or other health professionals.	_____	

Pace yourself

If you now have a long 'to do' list, pace yourself. Put dates next to each task, and cross them off your list one at a time.

For information on any health and disability support services available in your region, including help with modifications to your home, contact your general practitioner for further help.

If you would like more information about how ACC may be able to help you after your recent fall, or more importantly ways to help you prevent further falls, please ring your case manager or 0800 222 950.

If you have difficulty getting in and around your home because of a disability, you may qualify for funding to help you make modifications to help you remain in it, or return to it.

The amount you can get depends on the cost of the work needed and you may need to complete an income and cash asset test to work out if you need to pay anything towards those costs.

The first step is to contact a Ministry of Health Equipment and Modification Service (EMS) qualified housing assessor to help you work out what modifications are the most cost-effective option for your disability needs and if help is available to fund these modifications. If you're eligible for Ministry of Health funding, the EMS assessor will help you request the funding.

You can find more information at:
www.govt.nz/browse/health-system/help-in-your-home/modifying-your-house/

STAY SAFE OUT THERE

In addition to making your home safe, there are some things you should do when you're out and about:

- Take your time to check out your surroundings, particularly if out with friends. It's easy to get distracted when you're socialising or walking in groups.
- Use a walking aid if you need to – it will help you, and remind people to be considerate towards you.
- Take extra care when walking on tiled floors and wet areas, especially in shopping malls and supermarkets.
- On a bus or train, ask the driver or conductor not to move off until you're seated.
- Report hazardous areas in your community to the local council. Examples include missing handrails, uneven paths, slippery surfaces and poor lighting.
- Take a mobile phone out with you.







Stay active,
stay healthy,
**live stronger
for longer.**

WWW.LIVESTRONGER.ORG.NZ

**LIVE STRONGER
FOR LONGER**

PREVENT FALLS & FRACTURES