

# Falls and dementia

Dementia is a syndrome (a group of related symptoms) that is associated with an ongoing decline of the brain and its abilities. Some of these symptoms include memory loss and difficulties with thinking, problem solving, communication and language.

## Risk of falling

Falls aren't an inevitable part of living with dementia, however, some symptoms can make people with dementia more at risk of falls. People with dementia can also have the same health conditions that increase the risk of falls as people who don't have dementia.

## Risk factors with dementia

There are different personal risk factors that cause people to fall, however, people with dementia are at greater risk because they:

- are more likely to experience problems with mobility, balance and muscle weakness
- can have difficulties with their memory and finding their way around
- can have difficulties processing what they see and reacting to situations
- may take medicines that make them drowsy, dizzy or lower their blood pressure
- are at greater risk of feeling depressed
- may find it difficult to communicate their worries, needs or feelings

Each person will experience dementia in their own way, and may experience all or none of these risk factors.

## Your mobility



If you have problems with mobility, balance and muscle strength, it's important to remain physically active and get the right support to enable you to do this if you're having difficulties. Physical activity may also help in avoiding, delaying or reducing some of the mobility problems associated with dementia.

Alzheimer Scotland has produced an [activities guide for carers of people with dementia](#), with suggestions for keeping active.

[Learn more about managing your medication](#)

## Walking

Some people with dementia walk (sometimes referred to as 'wandering') that can put you at higher risk of fatigue, falls or getting lost.

## Your medication

Antipsychotic, benzodiazepine and anti-depressant medications are sometimes used to treat the symptoms of dementia. These medications can put you at risk of falling as they're known to cause:

- drowsiness
- dizziness
- a drop in blood pressure when you stand up (postural hypotension)

If you think you're experiencing any of these symptoms, speak to your GP as soon as possible.

[Learn more about how to keep active and exercise](#)

## Your vision



Dementia can affect the way we perceive and process information from our eyes. This can lead to sight loss, however, eye conditions that cause sight loss, and normal ageing of the eye, can also occur alongside dementia and could be the cause of this.

Loss of sight makes it more difficult to spot hazards and move around safely which puts you at risk of falls.

The RNIB have produced a [dementia and sight loss leaflet](#) with a checklist for identifying sight loss.

[Learn more about looking after your vision and hearing](#)

## Your environment

Environments that are dementia-friendly – meaning they're easy to navigate and free from hazards – can also help prevent falls. To make an environment safe:

- invest in bright bulbs and regular lighting
- add signage to doors and walkways to help you find your way around
- use contrasting colours to make things more visible – chairs, beds or toilet seats that are a different colour to the floor are easier to see

[Learn more about making your house safe](#)

## Your thoughts and feelings

People with dementia are at higher risk of depression, which can make you less active, and affect how well you eat, drink and sleep, leading to an increased risk of falls. If you feel your mood is low, you should speak to your GP or other health or care professional.

Anything that makes you stressed, distressed or restless can also increase your risk of falls. Some common triggers include:



- being in pain
- being hungry or thirsty
- needing to use the bathroom
- being frightened, bored or lonely

It's important for those who support you to try to understand what triggers these feelings.

Alzheimer's Society has information on [reducing and managing behaviour that challenges](#), to help you identify these triggers.