

Falls don't have to be part of getting older, experts argue

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Falls are the leading cause of fatal injuries among older people, but experts from The University of Manchester argue they should not just be written off as an unavoidable consequence of ageing. According to the researchers leading a European-wide study from the University, there are plenty of things people can do to prevent falls, and the injuries they cause, escalating with age.

The University of Manchester is leading the ProFouND (Prevention of Falls Network for Dissemination) - a European Commission-funded network aiming to introduce best practice in falls prevention and make available simple interventions to help prevent falls among older people.

Dr Emma Stanmore, from The School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work at The University of Manchester, said: "Many people wrongly think that falls are just a part of ageing and something to be expected as you get older which is not true. But this [misunderstanding](#) is not surprising as falls happen so often – around a third of people over-65 and half of those over 80 will fall every year.

"We want to raise awareness among older people, their relatives and organisations that work with older people that falls can be predicted and prevented using some simple methods."

Professor Chris Todd, who is the leader of the ProFouND network and based at Manchester, said: "There is very strong scientific evidence that we can prevent falls among older people. For example, strength and

balance exercises can protect against falls, but these should be done with professional guidance to ensure they are suitable and to maximise their effectiveness.

"We have brought together the ProFouND network funded by the EC, which is supporting the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing by making training material available across EU to help reduce the numbers of falls suffered by [older people](#) in Europe."

Dr Stanmore added: "You should minimise the amount of time spent sitting and being sedentary for extended periods – in fact older adults should aim to be active daily and do 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity in bouts of 10 minutes or more each week.

"If you have any medical conditions, this really should be done after checking the advice of a health professional. Why not try visiting your local library to find out about exercise classes close to you, like Tai Chi. Many health authorities have information on sessions that aim to improve strength and balance, or look at the NHS falls prevention page on the internet."

Research shows the risk of falls is increased if an older person has a history of falls, has problems with walking, uses a walking aid or has certain conditions including a previous stroke, Parkinson's disease, dementia or arthritis. Falls risk can also be increased if an older person takes four or more medications, have a fear of falling, problems with continence, poor vision or strength and balance problems. People with a history of falls should talk to a health professional about local falls services that might help them and ask to have the doctor or pharmacist review their medications.

The calls to take action to prevent [falls](#) come ahead of International Day of Older Persons day on 1 October.

Provided by University of Manchester

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