

Remember: Relaxation is a learned skill; you will need to practice it to get better - Get a book or CD about relaxation techniques from the library. Imagine a pleasant and relaxing place or scene

- Listen to music or read a book
- Go for a gentle walk
- Do some gentle stretching
- Take part in leisure activities.

Talk to other people

This often helps, especially if they have similar concerns or have fallen (other people in your social group, a health professional, family and friends. Don't be afraid to say what you feel.

Deep, relaxing breathing exercises

Place both of your hands with your fingertips lightly touching resting on your stomach (under your rib cage) keep your shoulders relaxed.

Take a deep breath slowly filling the bottom of your lungs and as you breathe in, notice your hands move up and out.

Breathing like this encourages a deep, slow, regular and rhythmical way which can help you to relax.

Deep breathing can be practised at any time. Try to use this deep breathing method when you are in a stressful situation.

Summary

Fear of falling can stop us from enjoying life to our full potential.

It can lead to avoiding activities which can results in a loss of confidence.

The symptoms of anxiety can make things more difficult on a daily basis.

Remember the cycle can be broken!

If you remain active, set some goals and use the relaxation techniques you can start to rebuild your confidence and get back to the activities you enjoy!

Falls and Fracture Prevention service

St Paul's Cray Clinic
Mickleham Road
Orpington BR5 2RJ

Tel: **0300 330 5777**

Email: bromh.cccpod3refs@nhs.net



Reducing fear of falling

Falls and Fracture Prevention service

What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease about something with an uncertain outcome:

It may cause physical symptoms such as an increase in heart and breathing rate, dry mouth, nausea. These symptoms will not harm you.

As a result, sometimes we may avoid certain situations.

Everyone feels anxious at some point in their life.

Anxiety and fear of falling

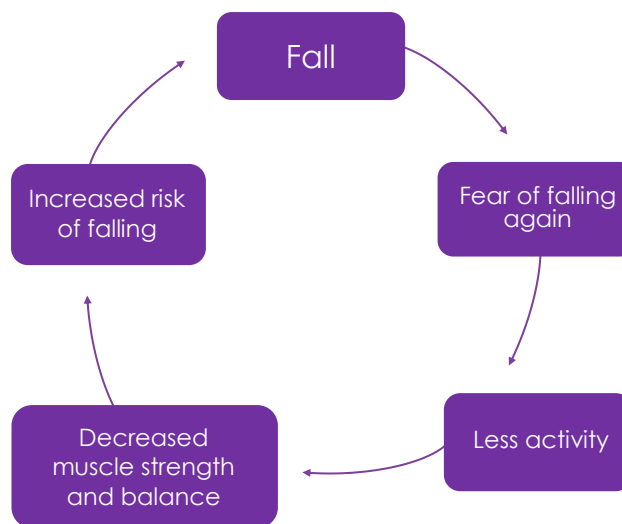
Anxiety and fear of falling is very common in older people, whether they have fallen or not.

Fear of falling itself is a risk of falling.

An ongoing, lasting fear of falling can cause problems and stop you enjoying life to the full, it may cause people to stop doing their normal activities and stay indoors more.

If a person restricts their activities it can lead to a loss of confidence and being less physically able to do every day activities.

The good news is that it is possible to break this fear of falling cycle!



What strategies can help you?

Be aware of what causes your anxiety, for example is it a certain step or stair in your house or is it walking outdoors? What might reduce this anxiety? An extra hand rail on the stairs? A walking aid? (see also the leaflet: independence and safety around the home)

- Stay active and make use of aids and devices that you have available.
- Set yourself small, achievable goals to help improve your confidence.
- Be active in your own home and go outside, go out with a friend if this makes you more confident to start with.
- Continue to do your hobby or start up a new one.

- Get involved with local community social, activity or exercise groups.

Think positive!

- Identify and challenge negative thoughts.
- Try to think positively - think about the times you have not fallen
- Think about what you can do now that you could not do a month ago and tell yourself how well you are doing.
- Make a contingency plan – if I did have a fall, what would I do? (see also the leaflet: reducing Fear of falling: Strategy Planning)
- Keep laughing - when a person smiles and laughs it helps them to relax.

Look after yourself

- Eat well, sleep well and exercise regularly to help you to stay healthy and active (see also the leaflet: Healthy Eating).
- Pace yourself, don't do too much at once, plan your day.

Try relaxation

- Deep breathing exercises (see over the page).
- Learn and use relaxation techniques because, relaxation helps to reduce muscle tension.