Falls are common among older people, with one in three people aged over 65 years falling over at least once per year. The rate is even higher for older people living in residential care, with half of the older people falling at least once each year. These rates are unacceptably high.

Although there is a decline in all components of the balance system with increased age, the decline is relatively small compared to the capacity of the system (ie falls are not usually due to age alone)

Falls are commonly due to a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic risk factors

Intrinsic factors are age related decline within the balance system, but more importantly, pathology affecting any of the systems involved in balance (eg glaucoma affecting vision, myopathy affecting muscle strength).

Most common intrinsic risk factors in include:

- History of falls
- Poor balance and walking
- Multiple medicines, and specific medicines such as psychotropics
- Urinary incontinence
- Chronic medical conditions, including stroke and Parkinsons Disease
- Reduced cognition
- Depression
- Sensory problems, such as impaired vision or dizziness

The more intrinsic risk factors, the greater the risk of falls
Extrinsic factors are things within the environment contributing to falls (eg slippery surface, uneven surface, loose cords or mats, poor lighting etc) or activities with a high risk associated with them (eg climbing on a chair to get an object from a high shelf). In many cases, extrinsic factors can be avoided.

Many falls are a result of both intrinsic and extrinsic factors

Research involving older people living at home shows that many falls and falls related injuries can be prevented by…..

- Individual risk factor assessment and management
- Various forms of exercise and activity
- Medicine review
- Vitamin D₃ and calcium supplementation
- Hip protectors

Falls prevention is achievable...
Falls prevention is everyone's responsibility