Rebuilding confidence after a fall: steps for a safer daily routine

A fall can shake more than your body. It often rattles your sense of independence, making everyday tasks feel uncertain. The good news is that you can rebuild both safety and confidence by taking a few deliberate steps. This article walks through a practical plan to create a safer daily routine after a fall, with attention to what to watch for at each stage.

Step one: assess your environment for trip hazards

The first step is to look at your home with fresh eyes. After a fall, the same spaces that felt familiar can hide risks. Start in the rooms you use most: the bedroom, the bathroom, the kitchen, and any hallway or passage you walk through daily.

Common trip hazards include loose rugs, electrical cords stretched across walkways, low furniture like coffee tables or footstools, and clutter on the floor. Check for uneven flooring, such as a raised threshold between rooms or a worn carpet edge. Also look at lighting. A dark hallway or a poorly lit staircase makes it harder to see obstacles, especially at night.

What to watch for: do not assume that a space is safe just because you have used it for years. Your balance and mobility may have changed after the fall, and a hazard you once navigated easily might now be a problem. Ask someone else to walk through your home with you. A fresh pair of eyes often spots things you have stopped noticing.

Step two: address bathroom hazards

Bathrooms are one of the highest-risk areas for falls. Wet, slippery surfaces, hard fixtures, and the need to sit or stand quickly all add to the danger. The most effective changes are simple and low-cost.

Start with the floor. Use a non-slip bath mat both inside the shower or tub and on the floor just outside. If your bathroom has smooth tiles, consider adding non-slip strips or a textured mat in the areas where you stand most. Next, look at how you get in and out of the shower or bath. A shower chair or a sturdy plastic stool lets you sit while bathing, reducing the chance of slipping. A hand-held shower head also makes washing easier without twisting or reaching.



For the toilet, a raised seat or a frame that fits around the bowl can make standing up less of a strain. Grab bars near the toilet and in the shower are a good addition, but they need to be installed securely into a wall stud or a solid backing. Suction-mounted grab bars can come loose and are not reliable for bearing weight.

What to watch for: do not rely on towel racks, soap dishes, or glass shelves for support. They are not designed to hold your weight and can break. If you are unsure about installing grab bars, ask a handyman or occupational therapist for advice.

Step three: improve your balance and strength

Falls often happen because of a sudden loss of balance or a moment of weakness in the legs. After a fall, working on balance and strength can help you feel more stable on your feet. You do not need a gym or special equipment. Simple exercises done at home can make a real difference.

Start with exercises that challenge your balance while keeping you safe. Stand near a counter or a sturdy chair and try lifting one foot off the ground for a few seconds. Hold onto the counter if needed, then try without holding on as you improve. Another good exercise is sitting and standing from a chair without using your hands. This strengthens the legs and mimics a movement you do many times each day.

If you have access to a physiotherapist or an exercise program designed for older adults, that can give you a plan that fits your current ability. The key is consistency. Even five minutes of balance work each day can build confidence over time.

What to watch for: do not push too hard too fast. If an exercise makes you feel unsteady or dizzy, stop and try a simpler version. Always have something sturdy nearby to hold onto. If you have a medical condition that affects your balance, such as inner ear problems or neuropathy, talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.

Step four: create a response plan

Part of feeling safe after a fall is knowing what to do if it happens again. A response plan takes away some of the fear and makes sure you get help quickly. The plan has two parts: how to call for help, and who to call.

Start by listing your emergency contacts. Include family members, neighbours, and your doctor. Keep the list in a place you can reach from the floor, such as a low drawer or a pocket on your walker. If you use a mobile phone, put the contacts on speed dial. Also consider a medical alert device. Many older New Zealanders choose a wearable fall alarm that can detect a fall automatically and send an alert to a monitoring centre or a family member. One option is the service provided by familyr.co.nz, which includes automatic fall detection, GPS location, and two-way voice communication, all without monthly fees.



Practice what you would do. If you fall and cannot get up, can you reach a phone or an alarm button? Can you call out for help? Think about how you would get to a door to let someone in. If you live alone, a wearable fall alarm gives you a direct line to help even when you cannot move.

What to watch for: a response plan is only useful if you can actually use it from the ground. Test it. Put your phone or alarm on the floor and see if you can reach it from a lying position. If

you cannot, adjust where you keep it or consider a wearable device that stays on your body.

Step five: review your footwear and clothing

What you wear on your feet has a big impact on your stability. After a fall, take a close look at your shoes and slippers. Look for a non-slip sole, a good fit, and support around the heel. Avoid backless slippers, flip-flops, or shoes with smooth leather soles. Even inside the house, wear shoes or slippers that stay on your feet and give you traction.

Clothing matters too. Trousers that are too long can catch under your foot. Robe belts or loose scarves can snag on door handles or furniture. Choose clothes that fit well without being baggy, and avoid anything that drags on the floor.

What to watch for: do not assume that bare feet or socks are safe on hard floors. Socks on timber or tile can be very slippery. If you prefer to go barefoot, make sure the floor is clean and dry, and consider wearing non-slip socks with grips on the bottom.

Step six: review your medications and health

Certain medications can increase your risk of falling. Some cause dizziness, drowsiness, or a drop in blood pressure when you stand up. After a fall, it is a good idea to review all the medications you take with your doctor or pharmacist. This includes prescription drugs, over-the-counter medicines, and any supplements.

Your doctor can check if any of your medications might be affecting your balance or coordination. Sometimes a change in dosage or timing can reduce the risk. Also get your vision checked. Poor eyesight makes it harder to see obstacles and judge distances, which increases the chance of a fall.

What to watch for: do not stop or change a medication on your own. Always talk to your doctor first. Also be aware that starting a new medication can affect your balance for the first few days. Take extra care during that period.



Step seven: build a daily routine that includes safety checks

Safety is not a one-time project. It works best when it becomes part of your everyday habits. Build a simple routine that you follow each day. For example, before you go to bed, do a quick walk-through of your home to make sure floors are clear and paths are lit. In the morning, put on your non-slip footwear before you get out of bed. If you use a walking aid, keep it within arm's reach at all times.

Another good habit is to take your time when changing position. Stand up slowly from a chair or bed, hold onto something stable, and wait a moment before you start walking. This gives your blood pressure time to adjust and reduces the chance of dizziness.

What to watch for: do not let yourself get rushed. Many falls happen when people are in a hurry. Give yourself permission to move at your own pace. If you feel unsteady at any point, stop and hold onto something solid until the feeling passes.

Rebuilding confidence after a fall takes time, but each small step makes a difference. By looking at your home, your body, and your habits, you can create a routine that helps you feel safer and more in control. And if you ever need help at the push of a button, a service like familyr.co.nz can provide that extra layer of reassurance.