

KEEPING WELL AT HOME



Looking after your home environment is important. Simple changes to your home set up and looking at different ways of doing things, can have real benefits in managing your MS and conserving energy. This fact sheet provides an overview of your home and some simple tips in keeping well.

Know Yourself

Set up your home so that it can support and compensate for your abilities when you are weak and/or tired. Be mindful that your circumstances are likely to change over time.

A. Falls Risk Factors:

1. Physical impairments and/or difficulties which includes: balance and gait problems, sensory impairments, foot problems, dizziness, lower limb weakness, inactivity, cognition problems, sleep disturbances.
2. Taking 4 or more medications

3. Poor nutrition
4. Vision problems
5. Contenance problems
6. Fear of falling

Questions to Ask Yourself:

- Where do you slip, trip, or fall? What areas give you problems?
- What will you do if you are home alone and need help?

When you address your MS symptoms, you help to reduce your risk of falling.

Considerations:

Keep as healthy and fit as possible. Eat well, exercise daily (as recommended by GP and Physio) and maintain good hygiene.

- Plan your day to maximise your energy and strength. Include frequent rest breaks.
- Avoid rushing.
- Concentrate on doing one thing

at a time—especially if you have trouble with memory or multi-tasking.

- Ask for help when you need it.
- Consider a personal alarm, a mobile phone, or some other system you can use to alert someone that you require their assistance.

B. Consider your Environment

The following are general ideas and suggestions.

Contact the MS Society to speak to an Occupational Therapist for individual evaluation of your personal circumstances.

The Passageway & Common Rooms

- Re-arrange furniture, and reduce clutter and obstacles to create clear pathways to help you move from one area to another.
- Remove/secure loose items on floors (eg. rugs).
- Raise furniture on special blocks or get a chair that you can get in and out of with ease (contact the OT department for suppliers).

The Kitchen

- Use a chair or stool at the sink or counter, or use a traymobile to take food to the table to prepare.
- Consider installing a low counter in your kitchen or bathroom that you can use while seated in a wheelchair or other chair.

The Bathroom/Toilet

- Consult an OT to measure up grab rails and other equipment for the shower, toilet, or bath.
- Consider continence products if you are rushing to the toilet or getting up 3 or more times a night to go to the toilet (eg. commode, pads, urinary bottle, etc).

You didn't choose to have MS, but you do have choices on how you choose to respond to your life with MS.

Your choices are affected by:

- your support network,
- what you want and need to do, and
- the environments in which you live.

Everyone adapts their home to suit their current needs.

Sometimes it's because there's a new baby in the home, an older relative moving in, or a condition or accident that changes our function and ability.

How you set-up and adapt your home to respond to your changing needs and symptoms can impact on your independence, safety, and quality of life.

Professional Support

An Occupational Therapist can:

- Do a home visit to help you identify, prioritise, and address your needs, and
- Take into account the relevant Australian building standards and recommendations for grab rails, ramps, and other modifications.

A Physiotherapist can:

- Teach you how to safely transfer or rise after a fall,
- Recommend individual exercises and activities to keep you as active and conditioned as possible.

Further Information

Independent Living Centre

11 Blacks Road, GILLES PLAINS
South Australia 5086

1300 885 886

A large range of aids and equipment is on display.

Items can be demonstrated or visitors can try out products to determine which equipment best suits their needs."

At Home with MS: Adapting Your Environment Brochure by Jane Harmon,

Occupational Therapist (USA) who has lived with MS for more than 25 years.

<http://www.nationalmssociety.org/multi-media-library/brochures/brochures-alpha-listing/index.aspx>

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