

Hints and tips on going up and down stairs

Keeping Active

- > Climbing stairs is an easy everyday physical activity that keeps your upper and lower limbs strong and muscles toned. Use it, or lose it is a mantra you may have heard and is so true for keeping mobile.

Preparation

- > Ensure that you wear footwear that fits well (e.g. not sloppy fitting slippers), with good grips and thin soles (so that you can feel where you put your feet on the step).
- > Keep the area around the stairs clear and attend to any loose or worn floor coverings as they can become a tripping hazard.
- > The stairs should be well-lit at all times.
- > Consider having a walking aid on each floor as it may not be possible to move larger items such as walking frames between floors.

Comfort

- > If you tire easily, go up the stairs one step at a time and take your time.
- > When climbing the stairs remember 'good leg to heaven', 'bad leg to hell' when coming down.

Equipment / adaptations

- > You could consider changing your banister rail to a mop-stick hand rail because they are round and easier to hold.
- > Extending existing banister rails by at least 15cm (6in) beyond the top and bottom of your staircase will help to steady you when stepping onto the first step and off the last step.
- > Consider getting a rail fitted on the opposite side to the banister.
- > If seeing the step clearly is a problem, add a strip of black tape to the edge of each step on the stairs to make them more visible.
- > Stone cellar steps that are worn are a risk, so they should be re-pointed and re-levelled to make them smoother.

Safety

- > Polished wood staircases are slippery and can be a risk to you.
- > If your heel is hanging off the back of the step on the way up the stairs, or the ball of the foot is not on the step as you come down the stairs, then come down the stairs slowly and go sideways.
- > If you are afraid of going down the stairs try going sideways or backwards ONE STEP AT A TIME – ALWAYS using the hand rail for support. When going up and down the stairs, all the forces goes through the knees, going either sideward or backward will help to reduce this.

- > Do not leave items on the stairs as these can become a tripping hazard.
- > Do not carry things up and down the stairs – make sure you have both hands free to steady yourself on the hand rail. You could use a backpack to put things in.
- > When using a spiral staircase always walk on the widest part of the step.