

In the October *Parkinsonian* an item on the World Parkinson Congress also included a quote from a British Parkinson's doctor around the dangers of carers trying to help their loved ones up after a fall when they were not sure how to do so safely. This Carers Corner addresses that very issue in this piece by Tara Martin, who is Clinical Lead at On the Go Physiotherapy, Christchurch.

### What to do if you have a fall and how to help someone up off the floor if they fall?

It is not recommended to try and stop someone from falling. This can lead to injuries. If someone is slowly losing control of their mobility and is about to fall, it is best, if you can, to help them safely to the floor. If you know how, you can do this by cueing them to kneel if they are falling forward, which is often the case if they are freezing.

The best thing to do after someone has had a fall is to try to stay calm. Assess the situation and ask yourself these important questions (if you answer yes to any of them, phone an ambulance):

- are they injured and in need of medical attention?
- have they lost consciousness?
- is there an immediate danger (for example fire or earthquake)?

If the answer is no, take a moment to help calm yourself and the person on the floor. Make them comfortable with a pillow. Then decide if it is safe to try and help the person off the floor.

- are they able to move around (roll or sit up) without help?
- are they able to follow instructions?
- are they in an area where there is enough space to move?

If the answer is "no" to any of the above, it is probably not safe to help the person up off the floor and you should phone for an ambulance.

To help a person up off the floor use the ACC guidelines. Bring a chair over to the person to help them get up and guide them through the steps. If they are still unable to get up off the floor, phone for an ambulance.

Phoning for an ambulance does not need to mean the person who has fallen will go to hospital. The ambulance crew can help the person up, but will only take them to hospital if they assess that they need medical attention. The ambulance crew can also see to minor injuries (cuts and scrapes) caused by the fall.

I recommend that people become familiar with how to get up off the floor and even practice this in a controlled and safe way. There is an Australian public health video that helps. Go to [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) and search on "Getting off the floor safely after a fall." Select the first video listed. Or visit [www.parkinsons.org.nz](http://www.parkinsons.org.nz) where it has been linked through.

A physiotherapist can help you with learning how to get up off the floor. You can contact your nearest Parkinson's branch or division for more information.

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