

Home environmental assessments and modification delivered by occupational therapists to reduce falls in people aged 65 years and over: the OTIS RCT

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Plain English summary

The OTIS RCT

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Plain English summary

Falling is a common problem among older people. In fact, up to half of people aged over 80 years fall each year, with most falls happening inside the home. Unfortunately, some falls cause serious injuries, such as broken bones. People often think that falls are part of getting older and that little can be done to stop them from falling. However, there are many ways to reduce falls. The Occupational Therapist Intervention Study (OTIS) explored whether or not a home assessment visit by an NHS occupational therapist could reduce falls among older people who are likely to be at risk of falling.

In total, 1331 people aged 65 years or older living in England took part in the study. These people were all sent an Age UK leaflet about how to prevent falls, and 430 people were selected at random to receive a visit from an occupational therapist. The occupational therapist assessed their homes for hazards, such as slippery floors or poor lighting, and made suggestions for changes. We collected information from participants using monthly falls calendars and postal questionnaires to ask them about their falls, their quality of life, how often they used NHS services and how often they used paid care workers. We also asked them about whether they had had equipment and adaptations installed as a result of the assessments.

We found that the home assessment visits did not reduce the number of falls people had or make any difference to participants' quality of life. However, many of the recommendations made by the occupational therapists were not carried out. The home assessment visits by an occupational therapist were not good value for money.

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This report

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