

'Stumble suit' could save NHS billions by preventing falls

◆ A wearable device that could banish falls forever, by detecting when you were about to trip over, and adjust your balance so you could remain upright, has come a step closer to reality.

Scientists in Switzerland have developed a carbon fibre "stumble suit" which may help prevent broken bones and dislocated hips.

The lightweight exoskeleton attaches to the legs and hips like a leg brace, but can counteract loss of balance after an accidental slip. One in three

pensioners has had at least one fall in the past year at a cost of £2.3 billion a year to the NHS.

The exoskeleton requires only a few minutes to detect walking patterns and the system's built-in algorithm looks for deviations in steps, which predicts the onset of a fall.

When that happens, the motors push both of the thighs down, reestablishing stability at the hip.

The new device was described in the journal *Scientific Reports*.

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