



## Why Going Downstairs Gets Harder

An evidence-informed guide from Strength With Purpose

Most people notice it at some point: going upstairs feels manageable, but going downstairs is where things change.

You slow down, reach for the rail, and become more deliberate. That's not a lack of effort — it reflects the demands of the task.

### Why Going Down Is Different

Going up produces force. Going down requires absorbing and controlling force while stabilising on one leg and preparing the next step.

### What Might Be Contributing

- Forward head posture increasing forward momentum
- Reduced eccentric quadriceps control
- Limited ankle mobility
- Weakness in tibialis anterior
- Glute and trunk stabiliser weakness
- Knee tracking and stability issues
- Reduced foot strength and sensory input
- Balance and proprioception changes

- Vision and depth perception factors
- Confidence and movement strategy

### **The Key Point**

It's rarely just one issue — usually a combination of factors. Strength matters, but so do coordination, mobility, and confidence.

### **Why This Matters**

When these factors combine, movement becomes less efficient, confidence drops, and people begin to avoid stairs.

### **What To Do About It**

If descending stairs feels difficult, a physiotherapist can assess contributing factors and guide safe improvements.

### **A Useful Reframe**

Instead of thinking 'I need to get stronger', ask 'what part of this movement needs more control?'

**Important:** This information is general in nature and not a substitute for personalised advice. If you experience instability or pain, seek professional guidance.