

Fall Prevention

Home Safety Checklist

Have you checked your home for safety hazards that increase your risk for falls? A thorough home evaluation is a great way to prevent senior falls and serious injury. Any items checked “no” are potential hazards that require attention.

Exterior

INSPECTION	Yes	No
1. Are step surfaces non-slip?		
2. Are step edges visually marked to avoid tripping?		
3. Are steps even and in good repair?		
4. Are stairway handrails present?		
5. Are handrails securely fastened to fittings?		
6. Are walking paths covered with a non-slip surface and free of objects that might be tripped over?		
7. Are walking paths clear, safe and even with no holes in the concrete?		
8. Is sufficient lighting available to provide safe ambulation at night?		
9. Are leaves and snow cleared away?		
10. Are tools and yard equipment safely and securely stored?		

Helpful tips:

- Poor lighting may contribute to trips and falls. Install light switches at the top and bottom of stairways to avoid climbing and descending in the dark.
- Install lights or colored tape on each step to provide a visual distinction between one step and the next.
- Paint doorsills a different color than the floor.

Interior (Entry and Main Living Area)

INSPECTION	Yes	No
1. Is the entryway clear of clutter with at least 36" wide access?		
2. Do the door locks operate smoothly?		
3. Does the porch light adequately light the porch and door?		
3. Are the light switches located near room entrances?		
4. Are the lights bright enough to compensate for limited vision?		
5. Are the lights glare free?		
6. Are stairways well lit?		
7. Are handrails present on both sides of stairway?		
8. Are the handrails securely fastened?		
9. Are the stairways free of objects?		
10. Are there light switches at top and bottom of stairs?		
11. Are the stairs marked for visibility with contrasting tape or step lights?		
12. Are steps slip resistant?		
13. Are steps even and uniform in size and height?		
14. Are there smoke and carbon monoxide detectors present with fresh batteries?		
15. Are all electrical outlets cool to the touch?		
16. Are electric cords properly plugged in and safely tucked away?		
17. Are there nightlights in halls and stairwells?		
18. If present, are electric heaters placed well away from rugs, curtains and furnishings?		
19. Is the fireplace chimney clear of accumulation and inspected annually?		
20. Are carpets in good repair with edges tacked or taped down?		
21. Are linoleum and plastic stair treads secure?		
22. Are throw rugs secured with non-slip backing and taped down?		
23. Are floors finished in a non-slip way? Has high polish been avoided?		
24. Are rooms uncluttered to permit unobstructed mobility?		
25. Is water temperature reduced to prevent scalding?		
26. Are water faucets clearly marked hot and cold?		
27. Is the furnace checked yearly?		
28. Are there house smoking rules established?		
29. Do the room furniture patterns allow easy access to doors and windows?		
30. Do the doors, drawers and windows open and shut easily?		
31. Is the furniture strong enough to provide support during transfers?		

32. Are telephones easily accessible?		
33. Are flashlights available in every room?		
34. Is glow tape stuck on important items to identify them in dark?		
35. Are cleaners and poisons clearly marked?		
37. Are window and door locks sturdy and operational?		
38. Are medications properly stored and usage instructions written down?		
39. Is a first aid kit available with up-to-date supplies?		

Helpful tips:

- Improve the lighting in your home by using brighter bulbs, at least 60 watts. Use lampshades or frosted bulbs to reduce glare.
- Use uncut, low pile carpeting instead of thick pile to reduce tripping potential.

Interior continued...

- Replace old windows with polarized glass or apply tinted material to eliminate glare without reducing light.
- Use chairs that have seating at least 14 –16 inches from the floor and sturdy armrests to provide leverage during sitting or rising for safer transfers.

Kitchen

INSPECTION	Yes	No
1. Are dishes and food stored on lower shelves for easy access?		
2. Is step stool sturdy and have a high handle for support?		
3. Are step stool treads slip resistant and in good repair?		
4. Is lighting sufficient, especially over the stove, sink and counter-tops?		
5. Are towels and curtains kept away from the stove?		
6. Are electric appliances and their cords kept well away from the sink?		
7. Is flooring nonslip?		
8. Are the "Off" indicators on stove and appliances clearly marked with brightly colored tape?		
9. Is there a telephone in the kitchen? Are emergency telephone numbers displayed including family contacts?		
10. Is there a fire extinguisher within easy reach and in good order?		
11. Are whistling teakettles and food timers in use?		
12. If the pilot light on the stove goes out, is the gas odor strong enough to alert the homeowner?		
13. Is food properly stored?		
14. Are refrigerator and cupboards free of spoiled or expired food?		
15. Are pots and pans of a lightweight type?		
16. Are pot holders and oven mitts available?		
17. Are the appliances including refrigerator and stove in good working order?		
18. Are pet dishes set out of walking area?		
19. Are table and chairs strong and secure enough to provide support when leaning, standing or sitting?		

Helpful tip:

- A well-organized kitchen will make cooking and cleaning easier and prevent falls. Rearrange frequently used items to avoid excessive bending and reaching. Use a hand held reaching tool for hard to reach objects.

Bedroom

INSPECTION	Yes	No
1. Are lamp and light switches within reach of the bed?		
2. Is the electric blanket in good working order?		
3. Is the telephone accessible from the bed?		
4. Is there an emergency telephone list near the telephone?		
5. Is there a flashlight and a whistle near the bed?		
6. Are medications stored away from the nightstand?		
7. Is the bed an appropriate height for easy transfer?		

Helpful tips:

- It can be challenging not to mention expensive to keep fresh batteries in flashlights. Try purchasing flashlights that plug into the wall and remain constantly charged. Some rechargeable flashlights even have built in nightlights to make them easy to locate in the dark.
- Stand slowly when getting out of bed. Give your body time to adjust to an upright position.
- Wear well-fitting slippers and avoid night wear that drags on the ground.
- Tie the belt on your robe
- Keep pathways between the bed and bathroom and the bedroom door unobstructed by clutter or furniture.
- The bed should be at least 18" high (from the top of the mattress to the floor) to allow more comfortable and safe transfers.
- The edge of the mattress should be firm enough to support a seated person without sagging.

Bathroom

INSPECTION	Yes	No
1. Is the door wide enough for unobstructed access with or without an assistive device like a cane, walker, or wheelchair?		
2. Is the threshold low enough to avoid being a tripping hazard?		
3. Does the floor have a non-slip surface?		
4. Are floor rugs secured with non-slip backing and carpet tape?		
5. Are grab bars securely fastened next to the toilet and in the tub and shower areas?		
6. Are there non-skid strips, decals or rubber mats in the tub or shower?		
7. Is there a tub or shower seat available?		
8. Is the toilet seat elevated for easy transfers?		
9. Is there sufficient, accessible, glare-free light available?		
10. Is there telephone access available in the bathroom?		

Helpful tips:

- If you are on strong medication or in a frail or delicate condition, do not bathe by yourself. Have someone assist you in and out of the bath and check on you periodically.
- Use a bath-chair, grab bars and hand held shower to provide stability when bathing.
- Do not use towel bars for support.
- Check water temperature with your hand before entering the tub or shower.

Some other things you can do to prevent falls:

- ❖ **Exercise regularly.** Regular exercise makes you stronger and improves your stamina, balance and coordination. It also helps to increase your bone density and balance hormone levels. It improves circulation, blood pressure and heart and lung health.
- ❖ **Do an annual Brown Bag Review.** Simply place all your medications, prescribed and over the counter meds, along with any herbal, nutritional and natural health supplements you take into a brown paper bag. Write your name, date and phone number on the outside of the bag. Take it in to your doctor or pharmacist to review your meds for potential interactions or side effects like dizziness or sleepiness. The more you and your doctor know about your medications, the less likely you'll be to experience bad effects.
- ❖ **Have your vision and hearing checked** once a year. Both vision and hearing problems can increase your fall risk.
- ❖ **Keep you glasses clean.**
- ❖ **Wear sturdy, well-fitting shoes** with non-skid soles.
- ❖ **Take care of your feet.** Talk with your doctor about any pain, numbness, tingling or any wounds that don't heal properly.