

# check for SAFETY



## A home safety fall prevention checklist

Each year, thousands of older Americans fall at home. Falls are often the result of hazards that are easy to overlook but also easy to fix. The following checklist will help you find and fix those hazards in your home. This checklist asks about potential hazards in each room of your home and offers a solution for each. At the end of the checklist, you will find other tips for preventing falls.

### FLOORS

Look at the floor in each room.

- When you walk through a room, do you have to walk around the furniture?
  - Ask someone to move the furniture so your path is clear.
- Do you have throw rugs on the floor?
  - Remove the rugs or use double-sided tape or a non-slip backing so the rugs won't slip.
- Are papers, magazines, books, shoes, boxes, blankets, towels or other objects on the floor?
  - Pick up items that are on the floor. Always keep objects off the floor.
- Do you have to step over or walk around cords or wires (such as cords from lamps, extension cords or telephone cords)?
  - Coil or tape cords and wires next to the wall so you can't trip over them. Have an electrician put in an additional outlet, if necessary.

### STAIRS and STEPS

Look at the stairs you use both inside and outside your home.

- Are papers, shoes, books or other objects on the stairs?
  - Pick up things that are on the stairs. Always keep objects off the stairs.
- Are some steps broken or uneven?
  - Fix loose or uneven steps.
- Are you missing a light over the stairway?
  - Have a handyman or an electrician put in an overhead light at the top and bottom of the stairs. You can get light switches that glow.
- Are the handrails loose or broken? Is there a handrail on only one side of the stairs?
  - Fix loose handrails or put in new ones. Make sure handrails are on both sides of the stairs and are as long as the stairs.
- Is the carpet on the steps loose or torn?
  - Make sure the carpet is firmly attached to every step or remove the carpet and attach non-slip rubber treads on the stairs.

### KITCHEN

Look at your kitchen and eating area.

- Are the things you frequently use located on high shelves?
  - Move items in your cabinets. Keep things you use often on the lower shelves (about waist high).

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- Is your step stool unsteady?
  - Get a new, steady step stool with a bar to hold on to. Never use a chair as a step stool.

## BEDROOMS

Look at all your bedrooms.

- Is the light near the bed hard to reach?
  - Place a lamp close to the bed where it is easy to reach.
- Is the path from your bed to the bathroom dark?
  - Put in a night-light so you can see where you're walking. Some night-lights turn on automatically after dark.

## BATHROOMS

Look at all your bathrooms.

- Is the tub or shower floor slippery?
  - Put a non-slip rubber mat or self-stick strips on the floor of the tub or shower.
- Do you have some support when you get in and out of the tub or up from the toilet?
  - Have a handyman or carpenter put in grab bars next to and inside the tub and next to the toilet.

## Other things you can do to prevent falls

- Exercise regularly. Exercise makes you stronger and improves your balance and coordination.
- Have your doctor or pharmacist look at all the medications you take, even over-the-counter medicines. Some medicines can make you sleepy or dizzy.
- Have your vision checked at least once a year by an eye doctor. Poor vision can increase your risk of falling.
- Get up slowly after you sit or lie down.
- Wear sturdy shoes with thin, non-slip soles. (Avoid slippers and athletic or jogging shoes with thick soles.)
- Improve the lighting in your home. Put in brighter bulbs. You may want to buy compact fluorescent light bulbs that cost less to use. Use lamp shades to reduce glare.
- It is safest to have uniform lighting throughout a room. Add lighting to dark areas. Hang lightweight curtains or window shades to reduce glare from bright windows and doors.
- Paint a contrasting color on the top front edge of all steps so you can see the stairs better. For example, if you have dark wood use a light colored paint.

## Other safety tips

- Keep emergency numbers in large print near each phone.
- Put a phone near the floor in case you fall and can't get up.
- Consider wearing an alarm device that will bring help in case you fall and can't get up.