



Fall Prevention and Home Safety Awareness

Falls can cause injuries for people of all ages. There are many simple things you can do to help prevent falls and to make your home safer. Use this handout to find and fix fall hazards in specific areas of your home.

Entrance to your home from outside:

- If the entrance to your home has a porch or stairs, add at least 2 handrails - ideally 1 on each side of the steps. Make sure that all handrails currently in place are steady and secure.
- Install an outdoor grab bar next to your door.
- Repair damaged/broken steps and uneven/broken walkways.
- Place bright colored tape or paint on the edge of each step or threshold so they are easy to see.
- Add a light fixture or a motion sensor light to keep your entrance well-lit.
- Have a home contractor build a ramp that allows wheelchair access in and out of your home if needed. (Community resources may be available to help with this - check with your local community organizations or church.)
- Use snow and ice melt or salt on your walkways during the winter.
- Remove snow and ice regularly.

Hallway or foyer:

- Do not use patterned, dark, or thick carpeting.
- Keep pathways wide and clear.
- Make sure your floor surfaces are dry. Do not walk on a wet floor.

- Have carpets stretched or removed to eliminate wrinkles or bumps.
- Add a carpet runner to slippery hallways or foyers and use double-sided tape or a non-slip backing to keep it in place.
- Remove clutter from your floors. Place items on shelves or in storage.
- Use a higher-wattage light bulb to improve brightness in your hallways.
- Ask someone to change your light bulbs if they are not easy to reach.

Living room:

- Run your electrical cords **behind** furniture.
- Use double sided rug tape or a rug pad to secure area rugs to the floor to prevent tripping.
- Repair or replace unstable furniture.
- Add leg raisers if the height of your chair is too low.
- Do not use a chair if it is too high or doesn't have arms. It will not provide enough stability for you to get in and out of it.
- Do not sit in a chair or on a sofa that is so low it is difficult for you to stand up.
- Add motion or sound activated lights or other remote control light switches (for example, "The Clapper") to make turning your lights on easier.
- Arrange furniture so you have easy access to wall light switches or lamps.

Kitchen:

- If cabinets are too high or too low, move items to the shelves closest to the counter. Keep frequently used pots, pans, and utensils in locations that are easy to reach.

- Add hooks to the wall to hang the pots and pans you use the most.
- Clear the counter of clutter. Use a Lazy Susan if available.
- Move your kitchen table closer to the counter for additional workspace.
- Use a sturdy step ladder with a safety rail to reach upper shelves or cabinets.
- Use higher-wattage light bulbs to improve brightness in your kitchen.
- Add under counter lighting and additional overhead lighting if possible.
- Add a pet gate to the entry ways of your kitchen to keep pets out while cooking.
- Store knives and other sharp utensils safely.
- Add lever-style handles to water faucets.
- Set the thermostat on your water heater no higher than 120° Fahrenheit to maintain a safe water temperature.
- Use an audible alarm on your kitchen timer.
- Sit at a table or on a stool of appropriate height while working in the kitchen.
- Keep a fire extinguisher in an easy-to-reach location.
- Always keep a cordless or cell phone with you or near you.

Bedroom:

- Sleep on a bed that is easy to get in and out of. Add bed risers under the bed legs to raise the height of the bed if it is too low.
 - Tip: Your bed is too low if your knees are above your hips when sitting at the edge of the bed.

- Remove your bed frame or use a lower profile mattress or box spring if your bed is too high.
 - Tip: Your bed is too high if your legs do not touch the floor when sitting at the edge of the bed.
- Add nightlights so you can see where you are walking at night:
 - You should have 2 nightlights in the bedroom.
 - Place additional nightlights in the hallway or path to the bathroom.
 - Place 1 nightlight in the bathroom.
- Place commonly used items on your bedside table, such as your medication, TV remote, a glass of water, etc.

Bathroom:

- Install grab bars on the wall near your shower, tub, toilet, and bath water faucets.
- Put a non-slip rug or bathmat on the floor next to your bathtub for safe exit and entry.
- Use a raised toilet seat for toilets that are too low.
- Use a sturdy non-skid shower seat in the bathtub or shower.

Basement laundry room:

- Add at least 1 handrail running the entire length of the staircase wall, ideally 1 on each side.
- Use handrails for stability when walking up or down the stairs.
- Ask others to carry heavy or large items up or down the stairs for you.

Garage:

- Add additional overhead or wall lighting.

- Repair uneven or cracked pavement.
- Do not place shoes near the door to the garage; arrange a place to put your shoes inside the garage or your home where you will not step on them.

What are some other tips to help keep me safe and prevent me from falling?

- Always keep your walking device, such as a cane or a walker, with you.
- Always have a cell phone or cordless phone with you in case of falls.
- Think about wearing an alarm device that will call for help if you fall and can't get up.
- Do not rush or walk too fast.
- Always watch where you are walking.
- Wear comfortable, well-fitting shoes or socks with non-skid soles.

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