

# Preventing Falls - Home Safety Checklist



## Make Your Home Safe

You can help prevent falls by following a few safety rules and by making changes to unsafe areas in your home.

### **In stairways, hallways, and pathways:**

- ✓ Have handrails on both sides of all stairs from top to bottom, and make sure they are tightly fastened.
- ✓ Hold the handrails when you use the stairs, going up or down. If you must carry something while you're on the stairs, hold it in one hand and use the handrail with the other. Don't let it block your view of the steps. Go down or up the stairs sitting on each step in turn if you think you have problems with your vision or balance.
- ✓ Make sure there is good lighting with light switches at the top and bottom of stairs and each end of a long hall.
- ✓ Keep areas where you walk tidy. Don't leave things on the floor—you might trip on them.
- ✓ Check that all carpets are fixed firmly to the floor so they won't slip. Put no-slip strips on tile and wooden floors. You can buy these strips at the hardware store.

### **In bathrooms and powder rooms:**

- ✓ Mount grab bars near toilets and on both the inside and outside of your tub and shower.
- ✓ Place non-skid mats, strips, or carpet on all surfaces that may get wet.
- ✓ Keep night lights on.

### **In your bedroom:**

- ✓ Put night lights and light switches close to your bed.
- ✓ Keep your telephone near your bed.

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## In other living areas:

- ✓ Keep electric cords and telephone wires near walls and away from walking paths.
- ✓ Tack down all carpets and area rugs firmly to the floor.
- ✓ Arrange your furniture (especially low coffee tables) and other objects so they are not in your way when you walk.
- ✓ Make sure your sofas and chairs are the right height for you, so that you can get in and out of them easily.
- ✓ Stay away from a freshly washed floor.
- ✓ Don't take chances. Keep the things you use regularly in the kitchen within easy reach.
- ✓ Don't stand on a chair or table to reach something that's too high—use a “reach stick” instead. Reach sticks are special grabbing tools that you can buy at many hardware or medical-supply stores. If you use a step stool, make sure it is stable and has a handrail on top. Try to have someone stand next to you.
- ✓ Don't let your home get too cold or too hot—being very cold or very hot can make you dizzy. In the summer, if your home is not air-conditioned, keep cool with an electric fan, drink lots of liquids, and limit physical activity. In the winter, don't let the nighttime temperature drop below 65 °F.
- ✓ Keep emergency numbers in large print near each telephone.

## Home Improvements To Prevent Falls

Many State and local governments have education and/or home modification programs to help older people prevent falls. Check with your local health department, division of elder affairs, or area agency on aging to see if there is a program near you.

Source: <http://www.nia.nih.gov/HealthInformation/Publications/falls.htm>

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