

Falls Prevention - Your Home Safety Checklist

A FEW SIMPLE STEPS TO PREVENT FALLS

Falls have enormous social, health and economic costs for both older people and the whole community. About a third of older people fall each year and half of all falls occur in and around the home.

A few simple steps can make your home safer. This checklist is a guide to those steps. A safer home can help you maintain an independent lifestyle.

This checklist is a series of questions, which look at safety in and around your home.

If you answer 'no' to any of the questions, the checklist suggests action you can take to make your home safer. Most changes are easy and inexpensive. Many of the items you may need such as paint, handrails, slip-resistant strips and lighting are available from hardware or department stores. Sales assistants or local service organisations will usually be able to help arrange someone to install the items where necessary. It's up to you to take steps to prevent a fall.

FLOORS Checklist - Answer YES or NO

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 1. Do your carpets and mats lie flat without wrinkles or curled edges? | Y/N |
| 2. Do loose mats have a slip-resistant backing? | Y/N |
| 3. Do you clean up spills as soon as they occur? | Y/N |
| 4. Are floors free of clutter? | Y/N |
| 5. Are all cords safely away from walkways? | Y/N |
| 6. Are floor surfaces non-slip? | Y/N |

SUGGESTIONS

- You are less likely to slip on surfaces such as carpet or unglazed tiles. These surfaces are preferable to polished floors, which can be very slippery.
- There is also paint on non-slip products.
- Remove all loose mats or ensure they are firmly secured and have non-slip underlay.
- Make sure your carpets are in good condition.
- Always wipe up spills as soon as they occur. Some floor surfaces are particularly slippery when wet.

ACTION NEEDED

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

LIGHTING - Checklist - Answer YES or NO

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 1. Are your lights bright enough for you to see clearly? | Y/N |
| 2. Are stairs and steps well lit? | Y/N |
| 3. Are light switches easy to reach and near each doorway? | Y/N |
| 4. Can you easily switch on a light from your bed? | Y/N |
| 5. Is there good lighting where you keep medicines? | Y/N |

SUGGESTIONS

- It is recommend 60-watt globes in all rooms, passageways and stairwells.
- Nightlights are an inexpensive way to provide light to dark passageways at night.
- Consider installing movement activated or photo electric lights to illuminate passageways.
- Have extra lights installed or place lamps in dark areas.
- Allow time for your eyes to adjust when going to and from light and dark areas.

STAIRS, STEPS and LADDERS - Checklist - Answer YES or NO

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 1. Are you able to see the edges of the steps clearly? | Y/N |
| 2. Are stairs and steps well lit? | Y/N |
| 3. Is there a light switch at top and bottom of steps? | Y/N |
| 4. Are non-skid treads or paint used on the edges of each step? | Y/N |
| 5. Are coverings on steps in good condition? | Y/N |
| 6. Do the steps have a sturdy handrail? | Y/N |
| 7. Is your stepladder or stepstool short and sturdy with anti-slip feet? | Y/N |

SUGGESTIONS:

- Stairs may need extra lighting.
- Lights which turn on automatically are recommended.
- Make sure there are handrails on at least one side of all stairways.
- Handrails on both sides of steps are preferable where possible.
- Move frequently used items to reduce the need for ladders.
- Have someone with you if it is necessary to use a ladder.
- Ensure your stepladder is in good condition. Ladders with handrails are recommended.

ACTION NEEDED

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

BATHROOM AND TOILET - Checklist - Answer YES or NO

1. Do you use slip-resistant mats in the bathroom?
Y/N
2. Is the soap, shampoo and towel within easy reach so you don't have to bend or reach too far?
Y/N
3. Are you able to get out of the bath or shower without holding onto taps or towel rails?
Y/N
4. Do you have handrails in the bath and shower?
Y/N
5. Are you able to easily get on and off the toilet seat?
Y/N
6. Are you able to walk directly into your shower without stepping over a raised edge?
Y/N

SUGGESTIONS

- Wet areas are more likely to be slippery and therefore hazardous. Take extra care when on a wet surface.
- Non-slip flooring is recommended for bathrooms.
- Paint on or self adhesive non-slip strips are advisable in the shower and bath.
- Handrails are recommended in all positions around the bath and toilet where you need something to hold on to.
- Occupational Therapists from your local Hospital can advise you on hand rails and other equipment for modifications to your bathroom to ensure your maximum safety and independence.

ACTION NEEDED

1. .
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

KITCHEN - Checklist - Answer YES or NO

1. Can you easily reach kitchen items you use regularly without climbing, bending or upsetting your balance? Y/N
2. Is there good lighting over work areas? Y/N
3. Do you mop up spills immediately? Y/N
4. Is there good ventilation to reduce the risk of eyeglasses fogging? Y/N

SUGGESTIONS

- Arrange your kitchen so the most frequently used items are easy to reach.
- A tray mobile allows you to transport more items with increased safety.
- Counters and tables should be sturdy enough to support your weight if you lean on them.
- Range hoods, vents or exhaust fans can be installed to provide better ventilation when cooking.
- If possible install a wall oven in preference to a low oven.
- Use a broad based, sturdy and secure ladder if it is absolutely necessary to reach high places.

ACTION NEEDED

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

LOUNGE ROOM - Checklist - Answer YES or NO

1. Can you get out of your lounge chair easily? Y/N
2. Are all cords, furniture and clutter kept away from walkways? Y/N
3. Is your furniture placed so that you don't have to stretch or lean too far to open windows? Y/N

SUGGESTIONS

- Higher chairs and chairs with solid armrests are easier to get in and out of.
- Keep telephone and electrical cords clear of walkways.
- Fans and heaters should not be placed in walkways or in the middle of the room.
- Remove loose rugs or apply slip-resistant backing or secure by other means.

ACTION NEEDED

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

BEDROOM - Checklist - Answer YES or NO

1. Can you turn on a light before you get out of bed? Y/N
2. Can you easily get in and out of your bed? Y/N
3. Do you have a telephone in the bedroom? Y/N
4. Is your electric blanket cord safely secured so you don't trip? Is the control easy to reach from the bed? Y/N
5. Is your bedspread made without a looped fringe? Y/N
6. If you use walking aids, are they easy to reach before you get out of bed? Y/N

SUGGESTIONS

- Have a light within reach of your bed. Consider a touch lamp or night lamp.
- Keep a torch next to your bed at night.
- Keep floors clear in bedroom.
- Secure loose telephone and electrical cords in the bedroom and out of walkways.
- Ensure your eyeglasses are easy to reach if you need them when you get out of bed.
- Beds should be at a good height for easy movement on or off.
- A firm mattress provides support. This will make getting into and out of bed easier.
- Get out of bed slowly - sit up before you stand up.
- If you are having difficulty getting in to or out of your bed, talk with an Occupational Therapist or Community Nurse.

ACTION NEEDED

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

CLOTHING AND FOOTWEAR - Checklist - Answer YES or NO

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. Do you wear shoes with non-slip soles? | Y/N |
| 2. Do your shoes have rounded broad heels? | Y/N |
| 3. Do you wear street shoes rather than slippers outside the house? | Y/N |
| 4. Does your clothing fit securely with no dangling cords or hems? | Y/N |

SUGGESTIONS

- Shoes and slippers should have non-slip soles with patterned tread and rounded, broad heels.
- Avoid wearing socks only, loose fitting slippers, leather or other slippery soles and high heels.
- Clothing should be short enough to avoid tripping (particularly nighties and dressing gowns).
- Sit down rather than stand on one leg when dressing.

ACTION NEEDED

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

OUTSIDE YOUR HOUSE - Checklist - Answer YES or NO

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 1. Are the edges of steps clearly marked? | Y/N |
| 2. Do step edges have an adhesive non-slip strip? | Y/N |
| 3. Do steps have a sturdy, easy-to-grip handrail? | Y/N |
| 4. Are the paths around the house in good repair? | Y/N |
| 5. Are the paths and entrances well lit at night? | Y/N |
| 6. Is the garden kept free of hazards (i.e. tools, hoses)? | Y/N |
| 7. Are your garage floors free from grease and oil? | Y/N |
| 8. Are the public areas around your house in good repair? | Y/N |

SUGGESTIONS

- Make sure all outside steps are highly visible by painting the front edge of the step a – contrasting colour or by putting on non-skid treads.
- See suggestions about steps on page 9.
- Paths need to be even and unbroken.
- Keep paths free of moss and leaves, and take extra care in wet conditions.
- Walk carefully near pets or small animals, their movement is unpredictable.
- Use a hose reel to store your garden hose.
- Store garden tools safely.
- Contact your local council to advise them of problem areas near your home.
- Many falls result from the use of ladders. Be extremely careful. If you cannot get someone else to assist you ensure you comply with all safety instructions.

ACTION NEEDED

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

There are many causes of falls and not all falls happen at home.

Others steps to prevent a fall include:

- * regular medical checkups
- * regular eye checks
- * well managed medications
- * healthy diet
- * regular exercise

What to do if you fall at home

- * Don't panic
- * Stay quiet for a moment, assess the situation
- * Make a decision whether or not to try to get up.

I WILL TRY TO GET UP

- * Use stable furniture to help
- * Take time to recover
- * Tell someone you have had a fall. Seek medical advice if necessary.

I CAN'T GET UP

- * Try sliding or crawling to seek help.
- Front door
- Telephone
- Personal Alarm
- Loud Noise
- *Make yourself comfortable and warm. Lie quietly until help arrives.

Acknowledgements

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