

Getting older doesn't have to mean giving up your home, but seniors must keep in mind that living at home comes with a greater risk of falling and being injured or worse.

This list of 100 tips for making your home a safer place includes small changes you can make that could make a big difference. Each area of your home has its own potential hazards so please carefully review each of the seven areas listed in this home safety guide.



1. BATHROOM (70% of falls in the home occur in the bathroom!)

- Place non-skids mats or strips inside and around the bathtub, near the toilet and sinks.
- If needed, use shower chairs and bath benches.
- A single lever, anti-scald mixing faucet is recommended for the bathtub.
- Remove throw rugs and bathmats.
- Make sure the bathroom door opens outward.
- Install door locks that can be opened from both inside and outside.
- Install night lights.
- Have a safe and accessible place for medications.
- Use a long-handled brush to assist with bathing.
- Make sure the bathtub or shower doors are made of safety glass or plastic.
- Grab bars should be installed on walls by the bathtub and toilet.
- Install a hand-held showerhead with flexible hose in the shower.
- Make sure towel bars and shower soap dish are firmly installed.
- Be sure all bathroom outlets have ground fault circuit interrupters. (GFCI)
 - that protect against electrical shocks.

2. KITCHEN

- Store household items on lower shelves within easy reach.
- Use a reaching device eliminating climbing or stretching for items on shelves.
- Have a fire extinguisher within easy reach.
- Keep floors clean and clutter free.
- Clearly mark “on” and “off” positions on appliances.
- Store sharp knives in a rack or drawer with a sturdy knife block.
- Use a tea kettle that has an automatic shut-off.
- Check food in the refrigerator regularly to ensure freshness noting expiration dates.
- Make sure stove and sink areas are well lit.
- If the kitchen has a gas stove, make sure it is equipped with pilot lights and automatic shut-off in the event of flame failure.
- Whenever possible, drawers are preferable to cabinet shelving.
- Make sure the kitchen cabinets can be reached easily.
- The kitchen light switch should be located near the door.
- A single lever faucet is recommended for the sink.
- IF climbing is necessary, use a sturdy stepladder or stepstool rather than a chair.
- Use non-skid floor wax on the floor.
- Be sure to wipe up spills immediately.
- Store hazardous items separately away from food.
- Unplug small appliances when not in use.

3. BEDROOM

- Keep a flashlight within easy reach of the bed-check batteries regularly.
- Install night lights in the room and on the way to the bathroom.
- Make sure there is adequate walking space around the bed.
- Have a sturdy arm chair in the bedroom to sit and dress.
- Flooring should be a non-slip surface.
- Locating the bedroom on the first floor is often preferable.
- Make sure the night table has room for a telephone, cell phone, glasses-important items.

4. LIVING ROOM

- Make sure all electric cords are placed along walls, not under rugs-away from traffic areas.
- All chairs and couches should be sturdy, stable and secure.
- Be sure chairs and couches are not too low making it easier to sit down and get up.
- Couches and chairs should have sturdy full arms to assist in sitting and rising.
- The living room light switch should be located near the entry door(s).
- Eliminate clutter, ensuring there are clear passageways.
- Avoid furniture that tilts or shifts. It might be used for support when walking.
- Place protective screens on fireplaces.

5. STAIRWAYS AND HALLS

- Be sure all stairways and hallways are well lighted.
- Install sturdy handrails that run the entire length on both sides of the stairs.
- The foyer should have a non-slip entry surface.
- Keep steps in good condition.
- Make sure all steps have non-skid strips. If carpeted be sure it is fastened securely.
- Install smoke detectors in the hallways.
- Place night lights in all hallways and by the stairs.
- Install light switches at the top and bottom of stairways and each end of hallways.
- Be sure inside doors do not extend over stair steps when opened.
- Be sure there is sufficient overhead space in stairways to avoid bumping one's head.
- Remove raised door thresholds from all room entrances.
- Use contrasting color tape to assure leading edge of steps is visible.

6. GENERAL HOME INTERIOR

- Keep your home well lit, especially in areas like stairways and halls.
- Install occupant sensor lighting so a room lights when someone enters.
- Use nightlights in hallways and bathrooms.
- Remove throw rugs.
- Repair broken or chipped steps, tiles or flooring.
- Clearly mark the top and bottom of stairs.
- Install smoke alarms on every floor-check batteries every six months.
- Install a carbon monoxide detector on every floor.
- Have medical alert systems easily assessable so if there is an accident or injury, help can arrive on the scene with the push of a button.
- Have an easily accessible fire extinguisher on every floor.

Home Safety Check List

- Install several phones throughout the home and make sure they can be reached easily from the floor.
- Post emergency phone numbers and family contact information by each phone.
- Arrange furniture to facilitate ease of moving around.
- Make sure there are no exposed electrical or extension cords that may cause tripping.
- Set the water heater thermostat at a maximum of 120 degrees to prevent scalding.
- Install inside/outside door handles and locks that are easy to operate.
- Lever-action door handles should be used instead of round doorknobs.
- Windows should be easy to open from the inside and have secure locks.
- Remove worn or torn carpeting and rugs.
- There should be several electrical outlets in each room easily accessible.
- Be sure all appliances, lamps and cords are clean and in good condition.
- Be sure there are no exposed bulbs in lamps or fixtures.
- Make sure all non-carpeted floors are not slippery.
- All electrical equipment should bear the Underwriters Laboratories (UL) label.
- All circuit-breakers, fuses and ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI) are properly installed to protect against electrical overload.
- Have an electrical inspector check home wiring to ensure it has enough capacity.
- Heating and air conditioning systems should be inspected every six (6) months for optimum safety and performance.
- Consider monitors & intercoms to facilitate easy whole home communications.
- Any exposed hot water pipes should be covered/wrapped.
- Add additional light switches or remote switches such as those activated by hand clapping.

7. OUTDOOR SAFETY

- Front & rear steps, porches and walkways must have good lighting.
- Remove raised door thresholds from entranceways.
- Install a ramp to the front and rear doors if necessary.
- Make sure front and rear steps are in good condition.
- Install railings on front and rear steps and for porches, balconies and terraces.
- Install security lighting along walkways in the front and rear of the home.
- Motion-sensor lighting is recommended.
- Make sure garage doors are easy to operate.
- Make sure the garage is adequately ventilated.