

Home Safety Checklist*

***Home Safety Checklist** is adapted from Safety for Older Consumers—Home Safety Checklist that is a publication of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.

It's Time to Mention Fall Prevention... Checking for Fall Hazards in the Home

This checklist can be used to spot environmental hazards in your home that could cause you to fall. Check “Yes” or “No” to answer each question. Then go back over the list and take action to correct those items that may need attention.

This checklist is organized by area of the home. However, there are some potential hazards that need to be checked in more than one area of your home. These hazards are reviewed at the beginning of the checklist.

Keep the checklist as a reminder of safe practice and use it periodically to re-check your home.

All Areas

- Yes No **1. Are lamp extension and telephone cords placed out of the flow of traffic?**

Cords stretched across walkways may cause someone to trip.

Recommendations:

- Arrange furniture so that outlets are available for lamps and appliances without the use of extension cords.
- If you must use an extension cord, place it on the floor against the wall where people cannot trip over it. Replace frayed or damaged cords.
- Move the phone so that telephone cords will not lie where people walk.

Yes No **2. Are small rugs and runners slip resistant?**

Recommendations:

- Remove rugs and runners that tend to slide.
- Apply double-faced adhesive carpet tape or rubber matting to backs of rugs and runners.
- Purchase rugs with slip-resistant backing.
- Check rugs and mats periodically to see if backing needs to be replaced.
- Place rubber matting under rugs. Rubber matting that can be cut to size is available

Note: Over time, adhesive on tape can wear away. Rugs with slip-resistant backing also become less effective as they are washed. Periodically, check rugs and mats to see if new tape or backing is needed.

Yes No **3. Are carpets and rugs in good repair?**

Recommendations:

- Torn rugs should be repaired or replaced.
 - Rugs should be taped on edges or tacked down to prevent curling.
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Yes No **4. Are all floors even, without abrupt elevation changes?**

Especially in older houses, unexpected rises on floors, decks, or walkways can throw a person off balance.

Recommendation:

- Install a slight ramp with a slip-resistant surface to “even out” floors.

- Yes No **5. Are rooms and passageways kept clear and uncluttered?**

Furniture, boxes, or other items could be an obstruction or tripping hazard.

Recommendations:

- Rearrange furniture to open passageways and walkways.
- Remove boxes and clutter.

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- Yes No **6. Are floors unwaxed?**

Waxed floors are more slippery than unwaxed floors.

Recommendations:

- Do not wax floors.
- If you must wax floors, use non-slip wax. Buff paste wax thoroughly.

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- Yes No **7. Are all rooms and hallways lit?**

Shadowed hallways can impair your ability to see the pathway clearly.

Recommendations:

- Use maximum recommended wattage bulbs in all light fixtures.
- Add lighting fixtures.

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- Yes No **8. Are light switches accessible on entering the room?**

Having accessible light switches reduces the risk of falling when walking across a darkened room.

Recommendations:

- Install light switches close to entryways.
- Install floor lamps or night lights close to entryways if it is not possible to install light switches.

- Yes No **9. Are emergency numbers posted on or near the phone?**

In case of emergency, telephone numbers for the police and fire departments, along with a neighbor's number, should be readily available.

Recommendation:

- Write the numbers in large print and tape them to the phone, or place them near the phone where they can be seen easily.

- Yes No **10. Do you have access to a telephone if you fall (or experience some other emergency which prevents you from standing and reaching a wall phone)?**

Recommendation:

- Have at least one telephone located where it would be accessible in the event of an accident which leaves you unable to stand.

Kitchen

- Yes No **1. Do you have a rubber mat on the floor in the sink area?**

A rubber mat can prevent slipping on wet floors.

Recommendation:

- Place a rubber mat in sink area.

- Yes No **2. Are “on” and “off” positions clearly marked on gas range dials?**

Clearly marked dials may prevent falls due to gas asphyxiation especially if your sense of smell is impaired.

Recommendation:

- Clearly mark the “on” and “off” positions on your gas range dials.
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- Yes No **3. Are frequently needed kitchen items out of reach (placed too high or too low)?**

Recommendations:

- Store frequently used items at convenient heights (waist level) so that climbing or stooping is not necessary.
 - Install shelves, cupboards at any easy-to reach level.
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- Yes No **4. Do you have a step stool that is stable and in good repair?**

The use of step stools to reach high shelves is *not recommended*. However, if you must use a step stool, take the following precautions:

Recommendations:

- Chose a step stool with a handrail that you can hold onto while standing on the top step.
- Before climbing on any step stool, make sure it is fully opened and stable.
- Tighten screws and braces on the step stool.
- Discard step stools with broken parts.

Bedroom

- Yes No **1. Are lamps or light switches within reach of each bed?**

Lamps or switches located close to each bed will enable people getting up at night to see where they are going.

Recommendations:

- Rearrange furniture closer to switches or move lamps closer to beds.
- Install night lights and keep a flashlight nearby.

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- Yes No **2. Is furniture arranged so that you can move around the room easily?**

Recommendation:

- Rearrange furniture so that you can move around - especially around the bed - without bumping furniture.

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- Yes No **3. Is there something sturdy to hold on to next to the bed to help you get in and out of bed?**

Recommendations:

- Place a heavy piece of furniture next to the bed.
- Install a grab rail on the wall.
- Use a three-pronged cane or walker for support.

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- Yes No **4. If you frequently need to use the toilet after you have gone to bed, is your bathroom close enough to your bed so you can avoid walking hurriedly to the toilet?**

Recommendations:

- Use a night light to provide a lighted path from bedroom to bathroom.
 - Keep a telephone within reach of your bed, in case of an emergency.
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Bathroom

- Yes No **1. Are bathrooms and showers equipped with nonskid mats, abrasive strips, or surfaces that are not slippery?**

Wet, soapy tile or porcelain surfaces are especially slippery and may contribute to falls.

Recommendations:

- Apply textured strips or appliqués on the floors of tubs and showers.
 - Use non-skid mats in the tub or shower and on the bathroom floor.
 - If you are unsteady on your feet, use a stool with nonskid tips as a seat while showering or bathing.
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- Yes No **2. Do bathtubs and showers have at least one (preferably two) grab bars?**

Grab bars can help you get into and out of your tub or shower, and can help prevent falls.

Recommendations:

- Check existing bars for strength and stability, and repair if necessary.
- Attach grab bars, through the tile, to structural supports in the wall, or install bars specifically designed to attach to the sides of the bathtub. If you are not sure how it is done, get someone who is qualified to assist you.

- Yes No **3. Is the water temperature 120 degrees or lower?**

Water temperature above 120 degrees could cause a bather to jump and fall.
Water temperature above 120 degrees can also cause water scalds.

Recommendations:

- Lower the settings on your hot water heater to “low” or 120 degrees. If you are unfamiliar with the controls on your water heater, ask a qualified person to adjust it for you. If your hot water system is controlled by your landlord, ask him to consider lowering the setting.
 - Note: If the water does not have a temperature setting, you can use a thermometer to check the temperature of the water at the tap.
 - Always check water temperature by hand before entering bath or shower.
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- Yes No **4. Are showers equipped with temperature-regulating valves to keep the water in the bath a constant temperature?**

Without temperature-regulating valves, a sudden change in the water temperature, brought on by someone using water in another part of the house, could cause a bather to jump and fall.

Recommendations:

- Install temperature regulating valves.
 - If your water is subject to temperature changes brought on by the use of water in other parts of the house, tell the other people in your house when you will be showering so they can plan not to use the water at that time.
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- Yes No **5. Does your bathroom floor have a nonskid surface, or at least rugs to soak up puddles?**

Recommendation:

- Install a nonskid bath mat by the tub or shower and sink.

- Yes No **6. Is your toilet seat too low? (Is it difficult to stand up from the toilet?)**

Recommendations:

- Install an elevated toilet seat.
- Fix grab rails into wall studs next to toilet.

- Yes No **7. Are bathroom door locks the type that can be opened from both sides of the door?**

Recommendations:

- Avoid locks on bathroom doors.
- Only use locks that can be opened from both sides of the doors to permit access by others if a fall occurs.

Medications

- Yes No **1. Are all medicines stored in the containers that they came in and are they clearly marked?**

Taking the wrong medicine or missing a dose of medicine you need, may result in physical problems that can cause falls.

Recommendations:

- Install brighter lighting in the area where you prepare your medicines.
- Keep a magnifying glass nearby, if needed.

- Store medicines beyond the reach of children.
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Chairs and Tables

- Yes No **1. Are chairs and tables sturdy, without casters?**

Furniture must be stable enough to support the weight of a person leaning on it.

Recommendations:

- Avoid tripod or pedestal tables. Tables should have four sturdy legs of even length.
 - Remove casters from chairs and tables. If casters are essential, place chairs/tables with casters against the wall.
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- Yes No **2. Are frequently used chairs equipped with arm rests and high backs?**

Using arm rests makes it easier to sit down into or to stand up from a chair. High backs provide support for the neck and also provide support when transferring weight.

Recommendation:

- Frequently used chairs should be equipped with arm rests and high backs.
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- Yes No **3. Are frequently used chairs high enough to ensure ease in standing.**

Getting up from a low chair can be difficult.

Recommendations:

- Frequently used chairs should have higher seats.
 - Place pillows or firm cushions in chairs with low seats.
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The Entry

- Yes No **1. Are walkways to your home or building free from cracks or holes?**
- Yes No **2. Is there adequate lighting at the doors to the building or house?**
- Yes No **3. Are doors in good repair and easy to open/close?**
- Yes No **4. If there is a door mat, is it in good repair and does it lie flat?**
- Yes No **5. Is the building entrance protected from rain by a roof or awning, or are there non-skid strips/safety treads?**
- Yes No **6. If there is an elevator, do the doors close slowly enough to allow you time to get in and out?**
- Yes No **7. If there is an elevator, does the elevator stop so that it is level with the floor of the lobby or hallway?**

- Yes No **8. Do outdoor stairs have sturdy, easy-to-grip railings?**

Recommendation:

- For residents of apartment buildings, the building management is responsible for these things. Problems should be brought to their attention, with an explanation of their risk to residents' safety.
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Porches

- Yes No **1. Are railings on porches and decks sturdy enough to bear the weight of several people leaning against them?**

Recommendation:

- Keep all railings on porches and decks in good repair.
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Stairs

- Yes No **1. Are stairs well lighted?**

Stairs should be lighted so that each step, particularly the step edged, can be clearly seen while going up and down stairs. The lighting should not produce glare or shadows along the stairway.

Recommendations:

- Use the maximum wattage bulb allowed by the light fixture. (If you do not know the correct wattage, use a bulb no larger than 60 watts.)
- Reduce glare by using frosted bulbs, indirect lighting, shades or globes on light fixtures, or partially closing blinds and curtains.
- Have a qualified person add additional light fixtures. Make sure that the bulbs you use are the right type and wattage for the light fixture.

- Yes No **2. Are light switches located at both the top and bottom of inside stairs?**

Even if you are very familiar with the stairs, lighting is an important factor in preventing falls. You should be able to turn on the lights before you use the stairway from either end.

Recommendations:

- If no other light is available, keep an operating flashlight in a convenient location at the top and bottom of the stairs.
 - Install night lights at nearby outlets.
 - Consider installing switches at the top and bottom of the stairs.
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- Yes No **3. Are sturdy handrails fastened securely on both sides of the stairway?**

The handrail should provide a comfortable grip and should always be used when climbing up or going down the steps.

Recommendations:

- Repair broken handrails.
 - Tighten fixtures that hold handrails to the wall.
 - If no handrails are present, install at least one handrail (on the right side as you face down the stairs).
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- Yes No **4. Do the handrails run continuously from the top to the bottom of the entire flight of stairs?**

If the handrail doesn't extend continuously the full length of the stairs, people who are not aware of this might think they have come to the last step when the handrail stops. Misjudging the last step can cause a fall. A handgrip should be available for even one step.

Recommendations:

- While using the stairs, try to remember that if the handrail begins beyond the first step or ends before the last step, you must be especially careful.
 - Replace a short handrail with a longer one.
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Yes No **5. Do the steps allow secure footing?**

Worn treads or worn or loose carpeting can lead to insecure footings resulting in slips or falls.

Recommendations:

- Try to avoid wearing only socks or smooth-soled shoes or slippers when using stairs.
 - Make certain the carpet is firmly attached to the steps all along the stairs
 - Consider refinishing or replacing worn treads, or replacing worn carpeting.
 - Paint outside steps with paint that has rough texture, or use abrasive strips.
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Yes No **6. Are steps even and/or the same size and height?**

Even a small difference in steps' surfaces or riser heights can lead to falls.

Recommendation:

- Mark any steps that are especially narrow or have risers that are higher or lower than the others. Be especially careful of these steps when using the stairs.
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 Yes No**7. Are coverings on the steps in good condition?**

Worn or torn coverings or nails sticking out from coverings could snag your foot or cause you to trip.

Recommendations:

- Repair torn coverings
 - Remove coverings if repair is not possible.
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 Yes No**8. Can you see the edges of the steps?**

Falls may occur if the edges of the steps are blurred or hard to see.

Recommendations:

- Paint edges of outdoor steps white to see them better at night.
- Add extra lighting.
- If you plan to carpet your stairs, avoid deep pile carpeting or patterned or dark colored carpeting that can make it difficult to see the edges of the steps clearly.

Smoke Detectors

 Yes No

1. Do you have properly located, working smoke detectors?

Smoke detectors provide an early warning and can wake you in case of a fire.

Recommendations:

- Make sure detectors are placed near bedrooms, either on the ceiling or 6-12 inches below the ceiling on the wall. Locate smoke detectors away from air vents.
- Check and replace batteries according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Note : Some fire departments will provide assistance in acquiring or installing smoke detectors.