

Checklist for Preventing Falls at Home

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Every year, thousands of older adults fall and hurt themselves. Falls are one of the main causes of injury and disability in people age 65 and older. Those who fall once are 2 to 3 times more likely to fall again. Hip fractures are especially serious, and most of them are caused by falling.

Falls are often caused by hazards that are easy to overlook. But these hazards can also be easy to fix. This checklist helps you find hazards in each room of your home, and it gives tips on how to fix the problem.

Rooms and Areas to Check for Preventing Falls at Home

Floors

- Move furniture so that your path through a room is clear.
- Remove throw rugs on floors. Or use double-sided tape or a special backing so the rugs won't slip.
- Pick up papers, books, shoes, boxes or other things that are on the floor. Always keep objects off the floor.
- Coil or tape wires (such as extension cords or lamp or phone cords) next to the wall so you can't trip over them. If you need another power outlet, have an electrician install one.

Stairs and Steps

- Pick up papers, shoes, books, or other things on stairs. Always keep objects off stairs.
- Fix loose, broken, or uneven steps.
- Make sure you have plenty of light in stairways. Have an electrician put in an overhead light at the top and bottom of the stairs. You can get light switches that glow.
- If you have burned-out lights in the stairway, have a friend or family member change the bulbs.
- Make sure that the carpet is firmly attached to every step. Or you can remove the carpet and attach rubber treads to the stairs to prevent slips.
- Fix loose handrails or put in new ones. Make sure handrails are on both sides of the stairs and span the full length of the stairs.

Kitchen

- Move items in your cabinets so that the things you use a lot are on the lower shelves (about waist level).
- If you must use a step stool, get one with a bar to hold on to. Never use a chair as a step stool.

Rooms and Areas to Check for Preventing Falls at Home

Bathroom

Put a rubber mat that won't slip or self-stick strips on the floor of the tub or shower.

Have a carpenter install grab bars inside the tub and next to the toilet.

Bedrooms

Place a lamp close to the bed where it's easy to reach.

Put in a night-light so you can see where you're walking. Some night-lights go on by themselves after dark. You might also turn on an overhead light in the hallway or bathroom before you go to bed.

Change the height of your bed if you have trouble getting in or out of bed. You might try a thinner mattress or a shorter bed frame.

Don't use sleepwear or bedspreads that are slippery.