



Safety Checklist: How to Prevent Falls in Your Home

For older Americans, falls represent a serious health problem, causing thousands of deaths and hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations annually. Each year, one in three adults age 65 or older will experience a fall, risking traumatic injury or disability and increasing the likelihood of future falls.

Around half of all falls occur at home. These accidents are almost always preventable, and should not be seen as a normal consequence of aging. Nearly all falls at home are caused by household hazards that can be easily identified and removed. This checklist* will help you find and fix those hazards, keeping you and your loved ones safer every day.

Check Your Floors

- It's important to have a clear path to walk through a room. If pieces of furniture are obstructing your way, ask a friend or family member to help you rearrange them.
- Throw rugs can be very slippery. Consider removing your rugs, or using double-sided tape or non-slip backing to secure the rugs to the floor.
- Clutter often causes a fall. Look for books, shoes, boxes, blankets or any other objects that might land on the floor, and clear them away.
- Coil or tape your extension or appliance cords next to the wall so you can't trip over them.

Check Your Stairs and Steps

- Always pick up papers, shoes, or any other objects on your stairs so your path stays clear.
- Fix any broken or uneven steps.
- Make sure your path up and down the stairs is well lit. If you don't have an overhead light, have an electrician put one in. Ask friends to change your light bulbs right away if they burn out.

*Content sourced from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov
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About the Texas Trauma Institute

The Texas Trauma Institute is built on a foundation of a long-term collaboration between Memorial Hermann-Texas Medical Center and UTHealth Medical School. Memorial Hermann-TMC has been designated a Level I Trauma Center for both adult and pediatric patients in Houston and surrounding areas, as well as the only verified burn center in the city. Building on these resources, the Institute brings together a world-class team of affiliated clinicians, researchers and educators armed with the latest in research and technology to deliver comprehensive, life-saving services to the residents of the Gulf Coast region.

- You should have two light switches for your stairs: one at the top, and another at the bottom. You can even get light switches that glow, making them easy to see.
- If your stairs are carpeted, make sure the carpet is firmly attached to each step. If your carpet is slippery, you can either remove it or attach non-slip rubber treads to your stairs.
- You should have firm and steady handrails on both sides of the stairs, running from top to bottom. If your handrails are getting shaky, have a friend help you fix them or install new ones.

Check Your Kitchen

- Move items in your cabinets so you don't have to reach for the high shelves. Keep things you use often on the lower shelves, at about waist level.
- If you must use a step stool to retrieve something from high up, get one with a bar to hold on to. Never use a chair as a step stool.

Check Your Bathrooms

- Tubs and shower floors can become very slippery. Make sure you have a non-slip rubber mat or self-stick strips on the floor of the tub or shower.
- It's best to have support when you get in and out of the tub or up from the toilet. Have a carpenter install grab bars so you'll avoid these common falls.

Check Your Bedroom

- Make sure you have easy access to light in your bedroom. Place a lamp close to the bed where it's easy to reach.
- The path from your bedroom to your bathroom should be well lit. Install a night light so you can see where you're walking. You can even buy a night light that turns on automatically after dark.

Other Things You Can Do to Prevent Falls

- Exercise regularly. Exercise makes you stronger and improves your balance and coordination.
- Have your doctor or pharmacist look at all the medicines you take, including over-the-counter medicines and herbal remedies. Some medicines can make you sleepy or dizzy.
- Have your vision checked at least once a year by an eye doctor. Poor vision increases your risk of falling, as do conditions such as glaucoma or cataracts.
- Always get up slowly after you've been sitting or lying down.
- Wear sturdy shoes both inside and outside the house. Avoid going barefoot or wearing slippers, especially backless slippers.

For more information, please visit trauma.memorialhermann.org



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