

## Home Assessment for Fall Prevention

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Use the following checklist to assess what actions you can take in and around your home to prevent falls. Place a check in the boxes that apply to you and that you plan to address.

### ❖ Stairs and Floors

Use caution on stairs. Small differences in step surfaces or riser heights can lead to falls.

- Pay attention** to the surface you are walking on. Look out for ice, wet leaves, moss-covered paths or steps, and slippery marble or tile.
- Walk on the grass** for better traction if sidewalks look slippery.
- Always grasp handrail** when going up and down steps. Consider installing handrails if you do not have them. Do not go down stairs backward.
- Paint the edges** of outdoor steps (or apply bright tape) and any steps that are especially narrow or are higher or lower than the rest.
- Take steps one at a time** if you are unsteady. Going downstairs, lead with your weaker leg. Going upstairs, lead with your stronger leg. A fold up cane can give you added confidence managing stairs.

### ❖ Lighting

Reassess your living area. Provide adequate lighting; shadowed or dark areas can hide tripping hazards.

- Keep rooms and stairs well lit.** Use the maximum wattage bulb allowed by the fixture. If you do not know the correct wattage, use a bulb no greater than 60 watts.
- Reduce glare** by using frosted bulbs, indirect lighting, shades or globes on light fixtures, or partially closing blinds or curtains.
- Avoid walking into dark rooms** by installing light switches near doors and entryways.
- Make sure stairs have light switches** at the top and bottom.
- Replace existing light switch with a “glow switch”** that can be seen in the dark.
- Install an automatic night light.**
- Keep a flashlight at your bedside** and in every room. Attach a small one to your key chain.

## ❖ Rugs

- Remove or secure rugs** and runners that tend to slide. Apply double-faced adhesive carpet tape or rubber matting to the backs of rugs and runners.
- Check rugs and mats periodically** to see if backing needs to be replaced.
- Make certain carpet is firmly attached** to the stairs.

## ❖ Bathroom

Fall-proof your bathroom. Wet soapy tile or porcelain surfaces are especially slippery and contribute to falls.

- 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.
- Use a stool with non-skid tips** as a seat while showering or bathing, if you are unsteady on your feet.
- Replace the shower head with a removable shower head**, which prevents you from having to lean your head back in the shower, causing dizziness.
- Put the soap in a stocking** (or buy a “soap-on-a-rope”) attached to the faucet to stop it from slipping away or from a fall while trying to retrieve it. Make sure all other bath accessories are within easy reach.
- Attach grab bars** through the tile to structural supports in the wall, and/or near the toilet. Or, install bars specifically designed to attach to the sides of the bathtub. Do not use towel bars as grab bars!
- Consider using a raised toilet seat.**

## ❖ Clutter

Take active steps both inside and outside of your home to decrease your chances of falling by reducing clutter.

- Rearrange furniture** and position telephone closer to switches; move lamps closer to beds. Arrange furniture, especially coffee tables, and other objects so they are not in the way.
- Do not stretch cords** across walkways, place them on the floor against a wall.
- Make sure couches and chairs are proper height** to get into and out of easily.

- Fold the sheets and blankets on your bed back and out of the way** when you are getting out of bed to avoid tripping.
- Be aware of where small pets** might be sleeping quietly, so you do not trip over them. Consider attaching a bell to their collar to help know where your pet is at all times. Use a flashlight at night.

## ❖ Taking Care of Me

- Avoid wearing long skirts** or floor length gowns.
- Avoid wearing only socks** or smooth-soled shoes or slippers when using stairs or walking on slippery surfaces.
- Wear proper fitting shoes.** Loose fitting footwear and high heels increase risk of falling.
- Avoid situations where head is tilted back** during standing, which can cause dizziness.
- Do not stand on chairs,** boxes, or other makeshift items to reach high shelves. Consider buying a long handled reacher or a step stool. Choose one with a handrail that you can hold onto while standing on the top step.
- Use a cane, walking stick or walker** to help maintain balance on uneven or unfamiliar ground or if you sometimes feel dizzy.
- Consider subscribing to an emergency response system,** such as Lifeline, that allows you to get help by the push of a button worn around the neck at all times.
- Consider purchasing a portable phone** that you can take with you from room to room or to the garden. Make sure a cell phone is programmed for the local emergency phone number, rather than 911.
- Let the doorbell and phone ring**—do not rush to answer it. If you use an answering machine, increase the number of rings before the message is activated.
- Have hearing and vision tested regularly** and properly corrected. Even the simple removal of earwax by your doctor can improve balance.
- Limit your intake of alcohol.** Even a little alcohol can further disturb already impaired balance and reflexes.
- Avoid getting up too quickly** after eating, lying down, or resting. Low blood pressure may cause dizziness at these times. Take time to get your balance!
- Remember to periodically re-check your home.** Put it on your calendar.