

Household Safety

Falls, burns, and poisonings are among the most common accidents involving older people. If you're an older adult living on your own, or care for an older person living alone, here's what you need to do to stay safe.

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Always keep a list of emergency numbers by each phone. Write this information in large enough print that you can read it easily if you are in a hurry or frightened. Be sure to list numbers for:

- 911
- Poison Control: 1-800-222-1222
- Family member or friend to call in case of emergency
- Healthcare provider's office

PREVENT FALLS

- If you have difficulty with walking or balance, or have fallen in the past year, talk to your healthcare provider about having a special falls risk assessment.
- Ask your provider if you would benefit from an exercise program to prevent falls.
- If you have fallen before, or are scared of falling, think about buying a special alarm that you wear as a bracelet or necklace. Then, if you fall and can't get to the phone, you can push a button on the alarm that will call emergency services for you.
- Don't rush to answer the phone. Many people fall trying to answer the phone. Either carry a cordless or cell phone or let an answering machine pick up.
- When walking on smooth floors, wear non-slip footwear, such as slippers with rubber/no-slip bottoms or flat, thin-soled shoes that fit well.
- If you have a cane or a walker, use it at all times instead of holding onto walls and furniture.

SAFETY-PROOF YOUR HOME

- Make sure all hallways, and stairs are well lit and clear of objects such as books or shoes.
- Use rails and banisters when going up and down the stairs. Never place scatter rugs at the bottom or top of stairs.
- Tape all area rugs to the floor so they do not move when you walk on them.
- Smokers should smoke outside. Never smoke in bed or when drowsy.

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Check off each item that describes the situation in your home. Some items won't relate to your home. For example, if you have a single story home items related to stairs should be eliminated since they don't apply to you. Each item that gets no checkmark represents a potential hazard.

BATHROOM SAFETY

- Grab bars on the bathroom walls, near the toilet or along the bathtub or shower
- A slip-resistant rug is next to bathtub or shower
- A mounted or suction liquid soap dispenser is on the bathtub/shower wall
- Non-skid adhesive textured strips are on the bathtub/shower floor
- A sturdy plastic seat (shower chair) is placed in the bathtub
- There is a raised toilet seat or a toilet seat with armrests to maintain balance getting on or off the toilet

BEDROOM SAFETY

- Clutter is cleared from the floor so that nothing is in the way
- A lamp, flashlight and telephone are within easyreach near the bed
- Nightlights are placed along the path from the bedroom to the bath
- A raised mattress is available to get in and out of bed easily

LIVING AREA SAFETY

- Furniture is arranged to create clear paths between rooms
- Low coffee tables, magazine racks, footrests, and plants are removed from pathways in rooms used for walkers or crutches.
- Light switches are easily accessible at entrances to rooms
- Glow in the dark switches or sound-activated lamps are available
- Loose rugs are secured with double faced tape or slip resistant backing
- In rooms with wall-to-wall carpeting, carpet is secure and there are no wrinkles or raised areas
- Electric appliance and telephone cords are out of your way but not put under rugs
- There are no wobbly chairs or tables which can be leaned upon
- Rugs are secured on concrete, ceramic or marble floors
- There are no loose wood floorboards that need repair
- Furniture is firm, high and has armrests to assist in standing
- A cordless phone is close by so there is no danger of hurrying to reach the phone

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KITCHEN SAFETY

- There are no throw rugs
- There is no liquid, grease or food spilled on the floor that needs to be cleaned up
- Food, dishes and cooking equipment are stored at an easy-to-reach, waist high level
- A step stool with a handrail is available to reach upper cabinets
- Non-skid floor wax has been used on the floor
- A counter-top toaster oven is available to avoid leaning over to or trying to reach an oven
- Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, grilling, or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove.-

STAIR SAFETY

- Stairways are well lit
- Steps have stair treads
- Stairways have a strong handrail, preferably on both sides

CARPET SAFETY

- Carpet is not patterned or deep pile
- Carpet is solid color to show the edges of steps more clearly
- A brightly colored piece of tape is used if there is difficulty seeing the edge of the stairs

BONUS SAFETY

- If there was a fire in your home, would everyone know how to get outside?
- Do you know what to do if you burn yourself? If a pan of food catches fire, slide a lid over it and turn off the burner. When in doubt, get outside and call the fire department.
- Have you determined what assistance anyone with a disability in your home would need to get out of the home in case of an emergency? Include everyone in your home in the planning process. Develop your escape plan around their abilities. Practice the plan at least twice a year both during the day and at night.
- Do you have a medical alert button? Consider having this device for access to help in an emergency
- Do you know how to put out a pan fire on the stovetop? If a pan of food catches fire, slide a lid over it and turn off the burner. When in doubt, get outside and call the fire department.
- Do you wipe up spilled liquids right away? Wipe up spilled liquids immediately. Even a few drops of liquid or grease can be a slipping hazard.
- Do you have a telephone in your bedroom? Have a telephone in your bedroom or close to where you sleep and post the local emergency number nearby in case you are trapped by smoke or fire.

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