

PREVENTING FALLS AT HOME



Connecting You to Community Services



If you want to stay in your own home for as long as possible. . .

You certainly do not want to fall and risk an injury. Most serious falls occur in and around the home, and can be life-changing. To help maintain your independence, it's important to understand the ways you can protect yourself from falls. Some simple precautions can ensure safety and reduce your risk of falling at home.

Have you done a safety check in your own home recently? This brochure will help you understand what to do to prevent falls around your home, empowering you to live independently as long as possible. Several organizations can assist you in learning about falls prevention in your home, such as your local **Area Agency on Aging, Aging and Disability Resource Center, and Indian tribal organizations**. **Contact the Eldercare Locator at 800.677.1116 or www.eldercare.gov** to identify these resources in your area.

If you are a low-income homeowner who cannot afford to make necessary changes to your home, there may be a **Rebuilding Together** affiliate near you that can help; go to **www.rebuildingtogether.org** to learn about repairs and modifications to your home and Rebuilding Together's affiliates.

A Checklist For Preventing

Stairways

- Make sure all handrails are not broken and are securely fastened.
- Both sides of the steps should have handrails.

Floors and rugs

- Make sure all floor boards are even and rugs, including area rugs, are secured to the floor with tacks, non-skid pads or double-sided tape.
- Use non-skid floor wax.

Bathroom

- Be sure that you can move safely in bathroom area, and in and out of the tub or shower.
- Remove soap build-up in tub or shower on a regular basis.
- Place non-slip strips in bath/shower.
- Install adjustable height shower heads.
- Mount grab bars at the toilet, bath and shower on walls with secure reinforcements, to prevent the bars from coming loose.
- Secure bath mats with non-slip, double-sided rug tape.

Kitchen

- Items that you use frequently, such as dishes and food items, should be easy to reach.
- If you have to use a step stool, make sure that it has a bar at the top to hold on to.

Falls in Your Home

Lighting

- Place nightlights in hallways, bedrooms, bathrooms, and stairways.
- Install light switches at the top and bottom of stairs.
- Place a lamp (and telephone) near your bed.
- Keep lighting uniform in each room and add lighting to dark spaces.

All Rooms

- Check whether hallways and rooms have obstacles to safe movement.
- Move newspapers, boxes, electrical and phone cords, plants, and furniture out of traffic areas.
- Store clothing, bed coverings, and other household items where you can reach them comfortably.

Outside of your home

- Repair holes, uneven joints on walkways.
- Arrange to have leaves, snow, and ice removed from stairs and walkways. Use salt or sand throughout the winter months.
- Make sure outside lighting is working in entryways and other walk areas.
- Check that handrails are not broken and are securely fastened. Both sides of steps should have handrails.

Other Essential Steps for Protecting Yourself Against Falls

Assessing your home to identify fall hazards and making the necessary changes to prevent them are significant steps. It's also very important to:

- Ask your physician or pharmacist about the effects of the prescription and non-prescription medications you are taking. Some medications can cause dizziness or light-headedness that can lead to falls. As people age, the effects of medications may change.
- Be sure to have your eyes checked every year. Vision problems can cause falls.
- Check with your physician about the physical activity and exercise appropriate for you. Stay as physically active as you can. Exercise helps to prevent falls, especially activities that enhance balance and coordination.
- Be careful in choosing shoes as they can cause you to trip. The soles should be non-slip and not too thick.



Resources

Many states and local communities have low or no-interest loans, tax credits or other programs for home modifications for those who are older or disabled. Many Area Agencies on Aging also offer a variety of services for assessing the safety of your home and making the appropriate modifications to prevent falls. To find out more about what's available in your own community, contact the key resources listed below.



Connecting You to Community Services

Eldercare Locator

Connecting You to Community Services

800.677.1116

www.eldercare.gov

The first step to finding resources for older adults in any U.S. community and a free national service of the U.S. Administration on Aging that is administered by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a).



Rebuilding Together

Rebuilding Together

800.473.4229

www.rebuildingtogether.org

A national organization that repairs and modifies homes of older, low-income homeowners to help them age in place. Through the support of corporate sponsors, local businesses and the hands-on work of over 200,000 volunteers, Rebuilding Together affiliates renovate and repair nearly 10,000 homes and nonprofit facilities annually. Visit the website and click on "Find an Affiliate" to find the one nearest you.



Administration on Aging



Advocacy. Action. Answers on Aging.