

## Home Safety Checklist

*Having a safe environment and home is critical for staying independent. Physical therapists (PT) and occupational therapists (OT) are good referral sources to consult for home safety, independence tips, and resources. Call 800-970-7131 to use your eldercare benefit, or consult a health care provider for a PT or OT referral, or consult the Area Agency on Aging for home modification assistance. Below are some home safety, environmental factors, and home modifications to consider:*

### Lighting

- Increase lighting in the home, especially along walkways (indoors and out). Keep lighting levels consistent, and consider using automatic sensor lights.
- Utilize night lights. Place a table lamp near the bed.
- Keep flashlights handy in case of a power outage.

### Living Areas

- Remove clutter from the floor.
- Don't use throw rugs, or secure them to the floor if you do. Seniors can easily get a foot caught on a rug and trip and fall.
- Position furniture in low-traffic areas and make sure furniture is stable and without sharp corners.
- Keep extension cords out of the way to prevent trips or falls.
- Anchor shelves to the wall so they can't fall or tip. Keep items on shelves at easy-to-reach levels.
- Install handrails on all stairs and steps, even if there are only a few steps (consider installing rails on both sides of the stairs).
- Secure stairway carpeting and runners.
- Make sure stairways are well-lit and that there are light switches at the top and bottom of each flight.
- Use a battery operated clock that automatically sets day, date, and time with large numbers.

### Kitchen

- Store heavy items in lower cupboards.
- Keep pots, pans, and food in easy-to-reach locations.
- Use a stable step stool with a safety rail for reaching high places.
- Make sure the on and off positions on the stove are clearly marked.
- Have the microwave at a level that can be easily accessed to avoid having to reach up to handle hot liquid or food.

### Bathrooms

- Place non-skid adhesive strips in the tub and/or on the floor to prevent slips and falls.
- Install a grab bar or handrail in the shower or bathtub and near the toilet. This will make getting in and out easier. A bathing seat or shower chair/bench and a hand-held shower head can also make bathing easier.
- Avoid cleaning products that leave a slippery residue, especially in the bathtub.
- Keep the water heater set below 120 degrees to avoid scalding.
- Put bright blue and red stickers on the water faucets to indicate cold water and hot water.
- Take down sliding glass doors and put up a shower curtain to make more space for getting in and out of the bathtub.

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### Outdoors

- Keep walkways and steps in good repair and free of clutter, snow, and leaves.
- Make sure outdoor stairs and decks have railings and provide good traction. Consider a ramp to replace steps, if necessary.
- Make sure thresholds and garage entries are not trip hazards.
- Make sure there are working locks on all doors and windows.
- Install dusk to dawn lights or motion detector lights.

### Fire Safety

- Develop a fire safety plan and escape route in case of fire.
- Keep a fire extinguisher handy, especially in the kitchen. Read the instructions and learn how to use an extinguisher before an emergency arises.
- Install smoke alarms on each level, including in hallways directly outside of bedrooms and in the basement.
- Test smoke detectors regularly and change the batteries twice a year.
- Use carbon monoxide detectors in homes with gas furnaces, gas water heaters, or wood burning stoves.
- Keep space heaters away from flammable materials.

### Medical Safety

- Keep a first aid kit handy. You can purchase an assembled kit or get help at your local drugstore with selecting the right items. The American Red Cross recommends first aid kits should contain the following:
 

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 absorbent compress dressings (5 x 9 inches)</li> <li>• 25 adhesive bandages (assorted sizes)</li> <li>• 1 spool adhesive cloth tape (10 yards x 1 inch)</li> <li>• 5 antibiotic ointment packets (approximately 1 gram each)</li> <li>• 5 antiseptic wipe packets</li> <li>• 2 packets of aspirin (81mg each)</li> <li>• 1 blanket (space blanket)</li> <li>• 1 breathing barrier (with one-way valve)</li> <li>• 1 instant cold compress</li> <li>• 2 pair of non-latex gloves (size: large)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scissors</li> <li>• 1 rolled bandage (3 inches wide)</li> <li>• 1 rolled bandage (4 inches wide)</li> <li>• 5 sterile gauze pads (3 x 3 inches)</li> <li>• 5 sterile gauze pads (4 x 4 inches)</li> <li>• Oral thermometer (non-mercury/non-glass)</li> <li>• 2 triangular bandages</li> <li>• Tweezers</li> <li>• First aid instruction booklet</li> <li>• 2 hydrocortisone ointment packets (approximately 1 gram each)</li> </ul>
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- Make sure prescription medications are accessible in case of emergency, or include them in your first aid or emergency kit.
- Have a health care provider review medications for potential interactions.
- Use sleeping pills cautiously. Some can cause dizziness and could contribute to unsteadiness and falls.
- Keep a list of prescriptions and dosages in the Vial of Life and place it on the refrigerator in case a senior is unable to tell someone what medications he or she takes (also keep a copy in the senior's wallet/purse).
- Keep a list of emergency numbers near all phones, set emergency numbers to speed dial. Use telephones with large print numbers and a loud ring tone. Keep the telephone within easy reach or use a cordless phone.
- Wear a medical alert bracelet.
- Consider an in-home medical emergency response system. Monitored systems provide 24/7 emergency services to seniors when experiencing a medical problem or trauma. Seniors wear a button and push when medical assistance is needed.
- Go through all medications annually and discard any expired medications.