

Safety At Home

Each year, nearly one million people over age 65 are treated in hospital emergency rooms for injuries associated with the products they live with and use everyday. Slips and falls are the main source of injury for older people in the home. Grab-bars and non-slip mats in the bathtub, handrails on both sides of the stairs, and slip-resistant carpets and rugs all reduce this risk. By spotting hazards around the home and taking some simple steps to correct them, injuries might be prevented. Use this list to spot possible safety problems in your home.

ALL AREAS OF THE HOME

In all areas of your home, check electrical and telephone cords/areas; rugs/runners/mats; smoke detectors; electrical outlets/switches; light bulbs; space heaters; wood burning stoves; and the emergency exit plan.

CHECK ALL CORDS, OUTLETS AND SWITCHES

- Are lamp, extension, and telephone cords placed out of the flow of traffic?
- Are cords out from beneath furniture and rugs or carpeting?
- Are cords attached to the walls, baseboards, etc., with nails or staples?
- Are electrical cords in good condition, not frayed or cracked?
- Do extension cords carry more than their proper load, as rated/labeled on the cord and appliance?
- Are any outlets and switches unusually warm or hot to the touch?
- Do all outlets and switches have cover plates, so that no wiring is exposed?
- Are light bulbs the appropriate size and type for the lamp or fixture?

CHECK ALL RUGS, RUNNERS AND MATS

- Are all small rugs and runners slip-resistant?
- Are emergency numbers posted on or near the telephone?
- Do you have access to a phone if you fall (or experience another emergency which prevents you from reaching a phone)?

CHECK SMOKE DETECTORS AND HEATERS

- Are smoke detectors properly located?
- Do you have properly working smoke detectors?
- Are heaters which come with a 3-prong plug being used in a 3-hole outlet or with a properly attached adapter?
- Are small stoves and heaters placed where they can not be knocked over, and away from furnishings and flammable materials, such as curtains or rugs?
- If your home has space heating equipment (i.e. a kerosene or gas heater), do you understand operating instructions?
- Is wood burning equipment installed properly?

CHECK THE HALLS, STAIRS AND EXITS

- Are hallways, passageways between rooms, and other heavy traffic areas well lit?
- For all stairways, check lighting, handrails, and the condition of the steps and coverings.
- Are stairs well light?
- Are light switches located at both the top and bottom of the stairs?
- Do the steps allow secure footing?
- Are steps even and of the same size and height?
- Are the coverings on the steps in good condition?
- Can you clearly see the edges of the steps?
- Is anything stored on the stairway, even temporarily?
- Are exits and passageways kept clear?
- Do you have an emergency exit plan and an alternate emergency exit plan in case of a fire?

LIVING ROOM/FAMILY ROOM

- Check all rugs and runners, electrical and phone cords, lighting, the phone area, and all passageways.
- Are chimneys clear from accumulations of leaves, and other debris that can clog them?
- Has the chimney been cleaned within the past year?



KITCHEN

Check the range area, all electrical cords, lighting, stools, all throw rugs/mats, and the telephone area.

Are towels, curtains, and other things that might catch fire located away from the range?

Do you wear clothing with short or close-fitting sleeves while you are cooking?

Are kitchen ventilation systems/range exhausts functioning properly and are they in use while you are cooking?

Are all extension cords and appliance cords located away from the sink or range areas?

For more information on cords, refer to the beginning of the checklist (pages 1 and 2).

Does good, even lighting exist over the stove, sink, and countertop work areas, especially where food is sliced or cut? (Make sure that the bulbs you use are the right type and wattage for the light fixture.)

Do you have a step stool which is stable and in good repair?

BATHROOM, TUB AND SHOWER AREA

In the bathroom, check bathtub and shower areas, water temperature, rugs and mats, lighting, small electrical appliances, and storage areas for medications.

Are bathtubs and showers equipped with non-skid mats, abrasive strips, or surfaces that are not slippery?

Do bathtubs and showers have at least one (preferably two) grab bars?

Is the temperature 120 degrees or lower?

Is a light switch located near the entrance to the bathroom?

Are small electrical appliances such as hair dryers, curling irons, etc., unplugged when not in use?

Are all medicines stored in the containers that they came in and are they clearly marked?

BEDROOMS

In the bedroom, check all rugs and runners, electrical and telephone cords, and areas around beds.

Are lamps or light switches within reach of each bed?

Are ash trays, smoking materials, or other fire sources (heaters, etc.) located away from beds or bedding?

Is anything covering your electric blanket when in use?

Do you avoid "tucking in" the sides or ends of your electric blanket?

Do you ever go to sleep with a heating pad which is turned on?

Is there a telephone close to your bed?

BASEMENT/GARAGE/WORKSHOP/STORAGE AREAS

In the basement, garage, workshop, and storage areas, check lighting, fuse boxes or circuit breakers, appliances and power tools, electrical cords, and flammable liquids.

If fuses are used, are they the correct size for the circuit?

Are work areas, especially areas where power tools are used, well lit?

Can you turn on the lights without first having to walk through a dark area?

Are power tools equipped with a 3-prong plug or marked to show that they are double insulated?

Are power tools guards in place?

Has the grounding feature on any 3-prong plug been defeated by removal of the grounding pin or by improperly using an adapter?

Are containers of volatile liquids tightly capped?

Are paints, solvents, or other products that give off vapors or fumes stored away from ignition sources?

REMEMBER PERIODICALLY TO RE-CHECK YOUR HOME.

For the best inspector in your neighborhood visit www.InspectorLocator.com

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