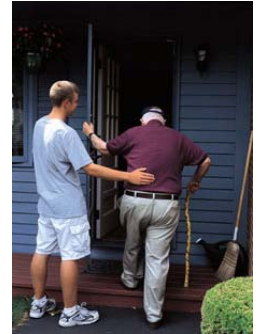


# Home Safety for Seniors

Hundreds of thousands of older Americans are treated in hospitals due to injuries they have sustained within the confines of their own homes. It is believed that many of these accidents could be prevented with some simple corrections on behalf of the home dweller. Seniors and their family members should spend a little time walking through all rooms of the apartment or home addressing the following safety items.



To help elders remain safely in their own homes the following items should be addressed:

## All Areas of the Home

- ❑ Place all extension, lamp, telephone and other cords out of the flow of traffic.
- ❑ Do not place any cords under furniture, rugs or carpeting for fear of shock or fire.
- ❑ Use tape, not nails or staples, to attach cords to the wall or baseboard.
- ❑ Replace all frayed or cracked cords.
- ❑ Do not overload extension cords for fear of fire. Only use an extension cord within the electrical ratings marked on both the cord and the appliance.
- ❑ Ensure adequate heating or ventilation by installing storm windows and air conditioning.
- ❑ Make sure there is a light switch located near the entrance of each room or install a night-light.

## Electrical Outlets and Switches

- ❑ Have any outlet or switch that feels warm or hot to the touch checked by an electrician.
- ❑ Make sure all outlets and switches have cover plates.
- ❑ Unplug all small electrical appliances when not in use. Electricity still flows between a plug and an outlet when the appliance is turned off.

## Medications

- ❑ Store all medications in the containers that they came in.
- ❑ Make sure each medication is clearly marked.
- ❑ Flush outdated medication down the toilet. Small children can gain access to medication thrown in a garbage bucket.

## Light Bulbs

- ❑ Make sure all light bulbs are the appropriate size and type for the lamp and fixture.

## Small Stoves and Space Heaters

- ❑ Place all heaters and small stoves where they cannot be knocked over, away from curtains, rugs, furniture or newspaper.
- ❑ Heaters with 3-prong plugs should be plugged into 3-holed outlets or used with a properly attached adapter.
- ❑ Kerosene heaters, gas heaters, and LP gas heaters must be properly installed and operated according to instructions with a proper venting system.

### **Emergency Exit Plan**

- ❑ Establish an emergency exit plan and an alternative emergency exit plan in case of a fire.
- ❑ Establish a meeting place outside of the home so you can be sure everyone has escaped.
- ❑ Practice your emergency plan.

### **Rugs, Runners, Mats and Stairs**

- ❑ Make sure all runners and small rugs are slip-resistant by attaching double-faced adhesive carpet tape or rubber matting on their backs.
- ❑ Replace any worn or loose carpeting, treads or risers on stairs in order to prevent falls.
- ❑ Paint outside steps with rough textured paint or use abrasive strips.
- ❑ Make sure that the steps are even and the risers are of the same size and height.
- ❑ Make sure the stairs are well lit and if possible install light switches at the top and bottom of the stairs.
- ❑ Install handrails on stairs for support.
- ❑ Install ramps if necessary for easy access in and out of the senior's home.

### **Telephone Areas**

- ❑ In large print list emergency numbers near every telephone.
- ❑ If the senior falls and cannot reach a wall telephone do they have access to another phone?

### **Smoke Detectors**

- ❑ Place at least one smoke detector on every floor of the senior's home.
- ❑ Make sure a smoke detector is placed near the bedroom, either on the ceiling or 6-12 inches below the ceiling on the wall.
- ❑ Do not place smoke detectors near air vents.
- ❑ Test the smoke detector monthly.
- ❑ Check and replace batteries and bulbs according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- ❑ Vacuum the grillwork of the smoke detector.

### **Kitchen Area**

- ❑ Place towels, curtains, and other things that might catch fire away from the range.
- ❑ Avoid wearing clothes with long loose fitting sleeves while cooking.
- ❑ Do not use the gas range or the oven to heat the home.
- ❑ Kitchen ventilation systems or range exhausts should be in proper working order and utilized when cooking.
- ❑ If the elder must use a step stool make sure it has a handrail and is stable and in good repair.
- ❑ Replace faucets and handles with levers if the senior has difficulty grasping and turning the existing ones.

### **Chimneys and Fireplaces**

- ❑ Clear leaves or other debris that can clog a chimney or fireplace.
- ❑ Annually have a registered or licensed professional check and clean the chimney to prevent the wood burning build up that can ignite and result in a fire.

### **Passageways**

- ❑ Make sure all hallways between rooms and other heavy traffic areas are well lit.
- ❑ Arrange furniture and remove clutter to clear passageways and exits.

## **Bathrooms**

- ❑ Equip bathtubs, showers and bathroom floors with non-skid mats or abrasive strips to prevent falls.
- ❑ Place strong, stable grab bars in the bathtubs and showers.
- ❑ Install stable shower seats or transfer benches.

## **Water Temperature**

- ❑ Have a qualified individual lower the setting of the hot water heater to “low” or less than 120 degrees to prevent tap water scalds.

## **Bedrooms**

- ❑ Arrange furniture close to light switches or move lamps closer to beds so elders can see properly should they get out of bed.
- ❑ Remove any fire sources such as smoking materials and heaters from close proximity to the bed or bedding.
- ❑ Place a telephone close to the bed.
- ❑ Never sleep with a heating pad that is turned on.
- ❑ Do not cover the electric blanket when it is on. Nor should you tuck in its sides or ends, as this can cause a buildup of heat, which can start a fire.

Remember to occasionally go through the home and make sure that everything is still safe.