

Home Safety Recommendations



GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Install at least one smoke alarm and at least one carbon monoxide detector on every floor. Have a fire extinguisher readily available.

Widen doorways, especially for wheelchair users, to at least 36 inches. Doorways should allow for four inches on each side of the wheelchair, as well as extra room to accommodate turns. Remove doors or place recessed hinges on doors, as possible, to provide additional clearance. Doors should open to at least 90 degrees. Curtains can be used for privacy.

Provide a clear area for maneuvering in all rooms and remove carpeting and throw rugs. Keep desk chairs and table chairs pushed in. Move large pieces of furniture out of the main traffic areas.

Many falls occur due to poor lighting, especially when going to and from the bathroom at night. To prevent such falls, make sure there is adequate lighting throughout the house, with easily accessible switches. Consider replacing existing switches with "glow switches" that can be seen in the dark. Rocker light switches are easier to use for those with limited hand function. Install nightlights. Keep an operating flashlight handy.

Make your flooring safe. Tape down electrical cords and area rugs. Do not wax floors; use non-skid, non-glare products to clean and polish floors. If rugs must remain on the floor, purchase new rugs with slip resistant backing or make sure to use double-faced adhesive carpet tape or rubber matting on the backs of rugs to secure them properly in place. Remember that over time, adhesive tape and slip resistant backing can become worn and less effective; periodically check your rugs to ensure they are secure.

Make sure to place telephone, lamp and extension cords out of the flow of traffic. Do not nail or staple cords or place furniture on top of cords; this can cause cords to become frayed or damaged, creating a shock or fire hazard.

Make sure emergency numbers are posted on or near the telephone.

Keep small stoves and heaters placed where they cannot be knocked over and away from flammable furnishings and materials, such as curtains or rugs.

Make sure you have an emergency exit for your home, as well as an emergency exit plan with which everyone in your home is familiar. Practice your emergency plans for quick and safe exit.

OUTSIDE YOUR HOME

If you have steps to access your home, you may want to build a ramp to make your entrance easier and safer. Measure the height of each step and count how many steps you have. For every inch in rise, your ramp should have a foot in length. For example, if you have three steps and each is eight inches high ($3 \times 8 = 24$), your ramp should be 24 feet long. Your ramp should be made of durable material with a non-slip surface. A ramp is particularly necessary for wheelchair and walker users. A physical or occupational therapist can help you design an appropriate ramp for your home.

Home Safety Recommendations



Your door entrance should open into your home and should open to at least 90 degrees. For wheelchair users, your door should be at least 36 inches wide or wider to have enough room for the wheelchair to pass through. Always measure the chair from wheel to wheel before widening doorways.

Install a garage door opener and provide a clear 3 – 5 foot space between your car and the garage wall to allow room to transfer.

Place a covered walkway, as needed, from your parking space to the entrance of your home.

Keep steps, yard and sidewalk free from ice, snow, toys, tools and debris.

Limit time in the hot sun.

BATHROOM

Insulate all exposed water supply and drain lines.

Install lever-type faucet handles in the sink, tub and shower, especially for those with a weak grip.

Use a chair for activities at the sink (e.g., shaving, grooming, etc.). Lower shelving, medicine cabinet, mirror and towel rods to chair height, as this will make reaching for objects easier. Provide an open space under the sink for a chair. Make sure there is enough clearance for your armrests, especially for wheelchair users.

Remove all throw rugs. These are quite hazardous, especially in the bathroom. Make sure floors have a non-slip surface. Space planning should allow for the use of a walker or wheelchair.

Place grab bars next to the toilet and around the bathtub and shower wall, as this will make transfers easier and safer.

Make the tub user-friendly with a hand-held showerhead and larger shower and/or bath controls.

Replace the toilet with a higher model with an elongated seat or purchase a raised toilet seat. This design will help taller people, wheelchair users and those with limited hip movement to transfer more easily.

Use a nightlight.

Place non-skid floor mats in the tub and shower.

Keep all electrical appliances away from water and unplug after use.

If you need to walk with an assistive device (e.g., walker, cane, crutches), use it. Falls on the bathroom floors, sinks and/or tubs can result in serious injuries such as a broken bone or head trauma.

Home Safety Recommendations



Place toilet paper within reach, as it is common to fall while reaching for toilet paper.

BEDROOM

Rearrange your furniture to allow for clearance to the bed and ease of mobility to the door and bathroom.

Place a nightstand by the bed and make sure a lamp or light switch is near the bed for mobility during the night. Nightlights can be used as well.

Remove all carpeting and throw rugs.

Modify your closet to make clothes easily accessible.

If you need to walk with an assistive device, use it.

Never sleep with a heating pad turned on; this can cause serious burns, even at relatively low settings.

Make sure a telephone is easily accessed from your bed for emergencies.

DINING ROOM

For wheelchair users, raise the dining room table to accommodate the armrests on the wheelchair.

KITCHEN

Widen the doorway to at least 36 inches or wider if you need to accommodate a wheelchair.

Install lever-type faucet handles.

Make sure curtains, potholders and dish towels are not placed near the stove.

Disconnect electrical appliances when not in use.

Install a light over the stove and the sink.

Make sure pan handles are always pointed away from the edge of the stove and other burners.

Clean up all grease, water and other spilled liquids immediately.

If you must sit and are unable to adequately see the stovetop, place a mirror above the stove positioned at a slant. This will allow you to adequately see what is cooking and safely engage in stovetop activities.

Home Safety Recommendations



Insulate sink pipes if kitchen cabinets are removed under the sink.

Use color contrast at the edge of counters so that you can see the edge clearly.

Purchase an oven assistive device called a “push/pull” to help pull out oven rack safely.

Don’t transport hot items on your lap or across your body. Use a cart or slide them on the counter tops.

STAIRS

Keep stairway approaches uncluttered and free of throw rugs. It is easy to trip on objects left on stairs, especially during an emergency.

Make sure all stairways have strong, sturdy banisters on both sides. Banisters should extend past the top and bottom steps.

It is best if all steps within a flight are the same width and height.

The stairway should be well-lighted, with electrical switches located at the top and the bottom.

Avoid wearing only socks or smooth-soled shoes or slippers on stairs.

Make certain that the carpet is firmly attached to the steps all along the stairs. Consider refinishing or replacing worn treads, or replacing worn carpeting. Avoid deep pile carpeting or patterned or colored carpeting that can make it difficult to see the edges of the steps clearly.

Paint outside steps with paint that has a rough texture, or use abrasive strips. Paint the edges of outdoor steps white to see them better at night.

Be smart and be safe!