



## Home Safety Checklist



**857 Post Road**

**Warwick, RI 02888**

**Phone: 401-467-3115 Fax: 401-467-9120**



## **Falls: How to Lower Your Risk**

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#### **Who is at high risk of falling?**

Anyone can fall, although the risk is higher in older people. This increased risk of falling may be the result of changes that come with aging, and certain medical conditions, such as arthritis, cataracts or hip problems.

#### **What can I do to lower my risk of falling?**

Most falls happen in the home. Consider the following tips to make your home safe:

- Make sure that you have good lighting in your home. A well-lit home will help you avoid tripping over objects that are not easy to see. Put night lights in your bedroom, hallways, stairs and bathrooms.
- Rugs should be firmly fastened to the floor or have nonskid backing. Loose ends should be tacked down.
- Electrical cords should not be lying on the floor in walking areas.
- Put hand rails in your bathroom for bath, shower and toilet use.
- Have rails on both sides of your stairs for support.
- In the kitchen, make sure items are within easy reach. Don't store things too high or too low. Then you won't have to use a stepladder or a stool to reach them. It's also a good idea to avoid storing things too low, so you won't have to bend down to get them.
- Wear shoes with firm nonskid soles. Avoid wearing loose-fitting slippers that could cause you to trip.

### What else can I do?

Take good care of your body. Try to stay healthy by following these tips:

- See your eye doctor once a year. Cataracts and other eye diseases that cause you not to see well, can lead to falls.
- Get regular physical activity to keep your bones and muscles strong.
- Take good care of your feet. If you have pain in your feet or if you have large, thick nails and corns, have your doctor look at your feet.
- Talk to your doctor about any side effects you may have from your medicines. Problems caused by side effects from medicine are a common cause of falls. The more medicines you take, the greater your risk of falling.
- Talk to your doctor if you have dizzy spells.
- If your doctor suggests that you use a cane or a walker to help you walk, be sure to use it. This will give you extra stability when walking and will help you avoid falls.
- Don't smoke.
- Limit alcohol to no more than 2 drinks per day.
- When you get out of bed in the morning or at night to use the bathroom, sit on the side of the bed for a few minutes before standing up. Your blood pressure takes some time to adjust when you sit up. It may be too low if you get up quickly. This can make you dizzy, and you might lose your balance and fall.



## Home Safety Check List

### Floors:

Q: When you walk through a room do you have to:

- Walk over wires or cords?
- Walk around furniture?
- Have throw rugs on the floor?
- Are there books, magazines, towels, shoes, clothing, boxes, or other small objects on the floor?

**Floors should be clear of any objects which could cause you to trip or catch on walkers or canes. Move cords and wires against the wall and secure them with tape. If cords will not reach consider using another outlet or having an electrician place a new outlet in a safer position. Throw Rugs can slide from under your foot while walking or the edge can catch on your foot causing you to trip. Use double sided tape or non-slip backing to secure rugs in place. Walking around furniture without a clear path can lead to falls so keep a clear path for safety.**

### Stairs and Steps:

- Are there objects (i.e. shoes, books, clothes) on the stairs?
- Are stairs even without cracks or crevices?
- Is there adequate lighting on the stairway?
- Is there a light switch at the top and bottom of the stairs?
- Does the light bulb work?
- Is the carpet on the stairs loose or torn?
- Is the handrail loose or broken?
- Are there handrails on both sides of the staircase?

**Adequate lighting will help you to see what is ahead and not miss steps while walking up or down. Having a light at both the bottom and the top of the stairs prevents you from having to go up or down in darkness. Torn/loose carpet or objects on the stairs**

**may cause you to trip/fall as you walk on it. Handrails on both sides of the stairs will give you support to go up and down properly.**

#### **Kitchen:**

- Are the things you use most often easily reachable?
- If you use a step stool is it steady?

**Limit the need to reach up for items which is the cause of many falls by placing commonly used items on lower shelves you can avoid over-reaching and prevent falls. If you use a step stool make certain it is even and steady also purchase a tool with a side bar for support when getting up and down.**

#### **Bathroom:**

- Is the tub or shower floor slippery?
- Does your bath mat have a rubber backing?
- Do you have to grab the wall/towel bar/sink or other support when getting in and out of the tub or off the toilet?

**Place a non-slip rubber mat or stick strips on the floor of the tub/shower. If you use a floor mat make certain it has a rubber backing to prevent slips. If you are grabbing onto other items to support yourself in the bathroom you should have a carpenter install grab bars in the tub or shower. Local hardware and home improvement stores also carry these supplies.**

#### **Bedrooms:**

- Is the lamp/light switch near the bed and easily reachable?
- Are there objects on the floor?
- Is there a clear path from the door to your bed?

**Having a clear path will prevent trips and falls in darkness. Placing a lamp or switch near the side of your bed will prevent the need to walk from the door to the bed in darkness.**

References:

Centers for Disease Control (CDC). (2014). Check for safety: A home fall prevention checklist for older adults. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Falls/CheckListForSafety.html>