

Most falls happen in the home, making it an important place to look at to prevent falls and improve safety. Some simple changes can be made to help reduce your risk of falling in your home. Many of these changes can be made at no cost, or very little cost, while others may require additional resources. Use this checklist to know what to look for and help fall-proof your home!

Back and front entrances and outside

- Watch out for unmarked or raised thresholds.** While not always possible, an entrance with no step up is ideal. Mark raised thresholds with bright tape or paint.
- Make sure you have bright outdoor lighting,** especially at night so you can see where you're going. Consider installing motion sensor lights, or lights that turn on automatically when it gets dark out.
- Check for uneven or cracked pavement and stairs.** Repair unsafe pathways as soon as possible.
- Walkways can become slippery when it rains and snows.** Take extra care and have snow and ice removed as soon as possible. Wet, fallen leaves may be an additional hazard.
- Consider installing a grab bar at any entrance to the home** near the door at chest level, so you can hold on to it if you need to when going in and out, particularly if you have things in your hands.
- Remove clutter** (cords, plants, boxes, etc.,) from walkways and stairs.
- An overhang above the door** can help protect from rain, snow and glare from the sun when going in and out of your home. If you don't already have one, this is something to consider.
- Consider adding a bench or stool outside** near the door(s) to put stuff you are carrying onto while opening and closing the door.
- Store items for pets out of the way.** Do you usually hang your pets' leash near the door? Make sure it is not dangling on the floor in the way.

Living room

- A chair that is sturdy and doesn't rock is your best bet.** Rocking chairs are unstable and could contribute to fall when getting in or out of the chair, or if you hold on to the chair for support.
- Remove clutter** from walkways that you could trip and fall over.
- Secure cords on the wall and out of walkways** or put items with cords in the corner of the room.
- Take extra caution on bright, sunny days and put the shades down** to reduce glare from limiting your vision while in your home. Glare can result in vision changes and reduced visibility.
- Move furniture and other items out of the way** so you have plenty of space to walk around freely. At least 2 feet of clear space is recommended for people that use walkers and wheelchairs.
- Ensure easy access to the blinds and light switches** so you don't have to lean over anything to open and close the blinds or turn the lights on and off, which could cause you to lose your balance.
- Secure all carpets and large area rugs** firmly to the floor.

Kitchen and dining room

- Store heavy appliances and things that are used regularly at a level where you can easily reach them.** If your balance isn't what it used to be, ask for help reaching for items that are stored too high or low. Use a reacher or grabber for small items that are out-of-reach. If you do use a stepstool, use one that has 2-3 steps (but don't stand on the top step) and that has a rail to hold on to. Store stepstools out of the way when not in use.
- Be sure to have enough counter space** when cooking or cleaning and a space clear of clutter.
- Replace throw rugs with heavy, rubber-backed mats.** Throw rugs could slide out from under you as you step on them or have turned-up edges that your feet (or cane or walker) catch on. It is best to get rid of throw rugs.
- Clean up spills immediately!** Don't wait; slippery and wet floors are a fall hazard.
- Consider getting chairs with armrests** for your dining room table. Armrests can provide support when getting in and out of the chair. Remove covers on chairs that aren't securely fastened, as chair covers may slip off (with you on them!) if they become loose.

Bathroom

- Be sure to have enough lighting in your bathroom** – especially at night; use a nightlight. There are also different kinds of lights you can install under cabinets or even right in your toilet!
- Use rugs with non-slip bottoms to keep your floors dry.** Instead of using a mat in the bathtub, use anti-slip adhesive strips for good traction, and be sure to replace them if they get worn out.
- Install secure grab bars** for help getting in and out of the tub and shower and near the toilet. Depending on your height, your toilet could be too high or low or your tub may be too high. Grab bars can be especially helpful if you're unable to change the height of your toilet and tub. Consult with a professional for how to install these correctly and in the right spot.
- Consider using a shower chair** for stability while bathing.
- De-clutter!** Move things on the floor out of the way.

Bedrooms

- If your bed is too high remove the frame or use a shorter mattress or box spring. If your bed is too low, use bed risers.** A bed that is too high (your feet don't touch the floor when sitting on the edge) or low (your knees are above your hips when sitting on the edge) can increase your falls risk.
- Keep a phone near the bed** for easy access so you can call for help if you fall.
- Have a nightlight** in your room so you can see if you get up in the middle of the night.
- Consider installing a bed rail** for extra support to stabilize yourself getting in and out of bed.
- Remove clutter from the floor and doorways** so you have a clear path to get around. Make sure sheets, blankets and clothes aren't dangling off the bed so your feet don't get caught in them.
- Watch for pets!** Our favorite companions can get caught underfoot or dart in front of us. Know where your pets are when you are moving about and clean up their toys frequently.

Basement and garage

- Add additional lighting to dimly lit spaces**, like the basement or garage. Be sure to change burnt out lightbulbs as soon as possible or have someone else change them if your balance isn't what it used to be.
- Reduce clutter in these spaces**, especially in walkways or in front of light switches and other things that you use frequently so you don't have to reach far and risk losing your balance.
- Watch out for the drain, hose(s) and cords on the floor.** Place these out of the way if possible, or make it known that they are there by wrapping them in brightly colored tape.
- Consider installing a grab bar near the door** at chest level if your garage has stairs leading into the house. You can use this for extra stability, especially if you have things in your hands.
- Watch for yard tools and other things leaning against the wall** that your feet could catch on.

Stairs

- Move items off the stairs.** Clutter on or at the bottom of the stairs is a trip hazard and reduces the amount of room you have to walk around freely.
- It's best to get rid of throw rugs or use heavy rubber-backed slip-resistant rugs or mats instead.** Do you have a throw rug at the bottom of your stairs? Throw rugs could slide out from under you as you step on them or have turned-up edges that your feet (or cane or walker) catch on.
- Handrails on both sides of the stairs is ideal.** Be sure the handrail is installed securely and that you can easily grip it.
- Have a contrasting color at the bottom of the stairs** or at the edge of each step so you can see where the stairs end, and the floor begins. Use paint or bright tape to mark this.
- Have lights at the top and bottom of the stairs** so you can see where you are stepping.

You may be asking yourself – how can I make these changes? Here's where to start:

- ✓ Talk to your local **Ageing & Disability Resource Center (ADRC)** to find out what resources they can provide. Find your local ADRC here: bit.ly/3pTaQxU
- ✓ Talk to an **occupational therapist.** Occupational therapists can assess your own home for fall hazards and suggest improvements that will work for you. Occupational therapists can also help you with finding equipment like grab bars and help you install them correctly.
- ✓ Start the conversation with **your family or the people closest to you.** Ask for their help in making your home safer for you.
- ✓ If you don't own your home, **work with your landlord** to make the necessary accommodations to help keep you safe from falls.
- ✓ Visit www.fallsfreewi.org for additional home safety tips and tools.