

HOME SAFETY FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

Home accidents are a major cause of injury and death for all Americans. For those over 60, the risk of death and injury may be greater than for others. Older people need to take special precautions to ensure a safe living environment. Most accidents in the home can be prevented by the elimination of hazards. The following are suggestions that you can make your home a safer place to live

General Safety Standards

First, consider whether your home meets the following general safety standards.

- Emergency numbers are posted by each telephone.
- Appliances, lamps, and cords are clean and in good condition.
- A sufficient number of outlets are located in every room where they are needed. Outlet extensions that can accommodate several plugs are not used.
- Overload protection is provided by either circuit breakers or fuses.
- Electrical service is of sufficient capacity to serve the house (it is up to code).
- The thermostat of the water heater is set at 110F or lower to prevent accidental scalding.
- Medications are stored in a safe place according to instructions on the label of the package or container.
- Carpeting and rugs are not worn or torn.
- Small, loose rugs have nonskid backing and are not placed in traffic areas.

Kitchen Safety

Look at the facilities in your kitchen and use the following suggestions to determine safety.

- The stove and sink areas are well lighted
- If you have a gas stove, it is equipped with pilot lights and an automatic cut-off in the event of flame failure.
- The stove is not located under a window in which curtains are hanging.
- The exhaust hood of the oven is provided with filters that can be easily removed for cleaning.
- The kitchen exhaust system discharges directly outside or through ducts to the outside and not into the attic or other unused space.
- Hazardous household agents are stored out of reach of children.

- When cooking, panhandles are turned away from other burners and from the edge of the stove.
- Small appliances are disconnected when not in use.
- Knives are kept in a knife rack or drawer.
- Counter tops and work areas are cleared of all unnecessary objects.
- Grease and liquid spills are wiped up.

Stairway and Hall Safety

Now consider whether your stairways and halls are safe for use.

- Steps are in good condition and are free of objects.
- Steps have nonskid strips, or the carpeting on them is securely fastened and free of fraying or holes.
- Smoke alarms are in place in hallways and near sleeping areas.
- Handrails are sturdy and securely fastened.
- Balusters are close enough to prevent a small child from placing his/her head between them.
- Light switches are located at the top and bottom of stairways and at both ends of long hallways.
- Doors do not swing out over stairs.

Living Room Safety

Check your living room for these features...

- Electric cords are placed along walls- not under rugs- and away from traffic areas.
- Chairs and couches are sturdy and secure.

Bathroom Safety

Make sure your bathroom meets the following standards...

- The bathtub or shower has a nonskid mat or strips on the standing area.
- Bathtub or shower doors are glazed with safety glass or plastic.
- Hand bars are installed on the walls by the bathtub and toilet.
- Electrical appliances are kept away from the bathtub/shower and sink areas.

Outdoor Safety

Does your outdoor area conform to these standards?

- Steps and walkways are in good condition

- Handrails are sturdy and securely fastened.
- Doorways are well lighted.
- Hedges, trees, or shrubs do not obscure the view of the street from the driveway.
- Garage doors are of a type that is easy for you to operate, even when snow is piled against them.
- The garage is adequately ventilated.
- Large trees are healthy and well maintained and have no dead limbs.
- Garden and lawn equipment is stored safely.
- Toxic materials such as pesticides and fertilizer are kept in their own containers, not in unlabeled jars or bottles.

Follow these suggestions in making your home a safer place to live for you and your family. If you spot any deficiencies, correct them as soon as you can.