

Tips for Preventing Falls in the Elderly

Outdoors

- Repair cracks and abrupt edges of sidewalks and driveways.
- Install handrails on stairs and steps.
- Remove high doorway thresholds.
- Trim shrubbery along the pathway to the home.
- Keep walk areas clear of clutter, rocks and tools.
- Keep walk areas clear of snow and ice.
- Install adequate lighting by doorways and along walkways leading to doors.

All Living Spaces

- Use a change in color to denote changes in surface types or levels.
- Secure rugs with nonskid tape as well as carpet edges.
- Avoid throw rugs.
- Remove oversized furniture and objects.
- Have at least one phone extension in each level of the home and post emergency numbers at each phone.
- Add electrical outlets.
- Reduce clutter.
- Check lighting for adequate illumination and glare control.
- Maintain nightlights or motion-sensitive lighting throughout the home.
- Use contrast in paint, furniture and carpet colors.
- Install electronic emergency response system if needed.

Bathrooms

- Install grab bars on walls around the tub and beside the toilet, strong enough to hold your weight.
- Add nonskid mats or strips to bathtubs.
- Mount liquid soap dispenser on the bathtub wall.
- Install a portable, hand-held shower head.

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- Add a padded bath or shower seat.
- Install a raised toilet seat if needed.
- Use nonskid mats or carpet on floor surfaces that may get wet.

Kitchen

- Keep commonly used items within easy reach.
- Use a sturdy step stool when you need something from a high shelf.
- Make sure appliance cords are out of the way.
- Avoid using floor polish or wax in order to reduce slick surfaces.

Living, Dining and Family Rooms

- Keep electrical and telephone cords out of the way.
- Arrange furniture so that you can easily move around it (especially low coffee tables).
- Make sure chairs and couches are easy to get in and out of.
- Remove caster wheels from furniture.
- Use television remote control and cordless phone.
- Avoid long sleeves and loose clothing while cooking.
- Use an easy-to-use microwave instead of a stove or oven.
- Have stove controls easily accessible.
- Keep pot handles turned to the back of the stove.

Bedroom

- Put in a bedside light with a switch that is easy to turn on and off (or a touch lamp).
- Have a nightlight.
- Locate telephone within reach of bed.
- Adjust height of bed to make it easy to get in and out of.
- Have a firm chair, with arms, to sit and dress.

Stairways, Hallways and Pathways

- Keep free of clutter
- Make sure carpet is secured and get rid of throw rugs.
- Install tightly fastened handrails running the entire length and along both sides of stairs.
- Handrails should be 34 inches high and have a diameter of about 1.5 inches.
- Apply brightly colored tape to the face of the steps to make them more visible.
- Optimal stair dimensions are 7.2 inch riser heights with either an 11 or 12 inch tread width.
- Have adequate lighting in stairways, hallways, and pathways, with light switches placed at each end.

Tips extracted from the Colorado State University Extension