Making Home Safer for Seniors
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Inform families about the in-home hazards that could threaten a senior’s independence and offer resources to help them age safely in place.
Learning Objectives

– Understand the importance of home safety
– Recognize the effects aging can have on safety at home
– Identify warning signs and potential dangers in the home
– Discover simple ways and resources to make a safer home
Research

- 33% U.S. and 27% Canada
  Trips to the hospital and ER are caused by falls and other home accidents, according to seniors

- 85% U.S. and 89% Canada
  Seniors have done nothing to prepare their homes for aging

- 65% U.S. and 71% Canada
  Seniors’ homes have at least one potential safety issue, according to adult children
Research – ER Physicians

• 48% U.S. and 53% Canada  
  Home accidents can be prevented

• 97% U.S. and 99% Canada  
  Not having help at home is a serious risk factor

• 61% U.S. and 66% Canada  
  Seniors seen in the ER could benefit from extra support at home
Helpful Solutions

• Inexpensive fixes in the home
• Basic home safety checklist
• Interactive online home safety assessment tool
5 Fixes under $500

- Purchase handheld showerheads.
- Install grab bars on walls near the shower or tub.
- Convert to lever handle faucets.
- Add lighting to closets and pantries.
- Add swing clear hinges.
Annual Safety Check

Home Safety Checklist

Use the checklist from Home Instead Senior Care® to help determine if your senior’s home is safe from hazards that could jeopardize well-being and independence.

For more information, go to MakingHomeSaferForSeniors.com.

Bedroom

Suggestions:
1. Dusting draperies, or use double-sided tape or a rag pad to secure the drapes to the floor. If there is a pet, use a non-slip carpet cover to prevent the problem.
2. Tighten any fasteners (e.g., pin, button, or loop) on the rug, drapery, or other items that may pin the carpet or other floor covering to the floor. This can cause injuries.
3. Consider a cordless phone, if possible, that has an alert sound. It can be turned on and the cordless phone can be turned off to prevent tripping over the cord.
4. Use thick, non-slip bath mats in the bathroom. It can help prevent slipping and falling, especially in the wet areas.
5. Install a smoke detector in the bedroom. It should be placed near the head of the bed. It should be tested regularly and replaced every 10 years.
6. Use extension cords to use electrical cords behind furniture. This can help prevent tripping.
7. Turn off the bedroom lights if the light is not needed. It can help prevent accidents.

Notes:

1. Bed too high or low
2. Do not block door with furniture
3. Cupboard too high or too low
4. Do not use electrical cords behind furniture
5. Do not plug in any electronics near the bed
6. Do not use any electrical cords near water
7. Do not use any electrical cords near the bed

To us, it’s personal.

Home Instead
Senior Care®
Interactive Online Assessment
Bedroom

• Do throw rugs create a tripping hazard? Is the carpet torn?
• Is the room cluttered with clothing, magazines, newspaper or other items? Is there too much furniture for the space?
• Does the senior lack access to a telephone or cell phone, especially at night?
• Is there enough light?
• Is the bed too high or low?
• Do tangled electrical cords obstruct pathways?
• Does the furniture provide proper support, if needed?
Bathroom and Shower

• Are grab bars available near the tub, shower and toilet?
• Is the floor slippery? Is there a lack of bath mats?
• Is the bathtub too high?
• Is the toilet the correct height?
• Is there the potential for bath water to be too hot?
• Are medications stored properly: not too high or too low for the senior to reach?
• Are mobility and joint problems making it difficult for the senior to reach into overhead cabinets, comb his hair or lift her leg to get into a bathtub?
Living Room

- Is there too much clutter and not enough space to move around furniture?
- Is furniture unstable?
- Can the senior reach the light switch to turn it off or on?
- Is there adequate lighting?
- Do throw rugs and electrical cords pose a tripping hazard?
- Is the floor uneven or is carpet torn?
- Is the room temperature too hot or cold?
- Does glare from the windows make it difficult for a senior to see?
- Do the conditions of aging make it difficult for a senior to get out of a chair?
Hallway

• Is there a working smoke alarm and carbon monoxide detector in place?
• Is there adequate light at night?
• Does the senior have trouble finding the bathroom at night?
Kitchen

- Are cabinets too high or low?
- Is there clutter on countertops or throughout the kitchen?
- Are pathways obstructed?
- Is there adequate light for cooking?
- Are dangerous chemicals and cleaning materials secure?
- Is the floor slippery?
- Is there spoiled food in the refrigerator?
- Is emergency contact information within easy access?
- Is the senior at risk of harming herself with a sharp utensil or by causing a fire?
Laundry Room/Basement

- Is there adequate light on basement stairways?
- Are there sturdy handrails for the stairway?
- Are the steps too steep or slippery?
- Does the last step blend in with the floor?
- Are the pathways cluttered?
- Is laundry detergent in bottles or boxes too heavy to lift?
- Has detergent spilled on the laundry room floor?
- Does the senior have to carry baskets of laundry up and down stairs?
Garage

• Do the stairs into the garage have secure railings?
• Is trash piling up?
• Are power tools and lawn chemicals secure?
• Is the garage secure?
Foyer/Front Yard

- Do steps have proper handrails?
- Are steps too steep, cracked or uneven?
- Are driveways or walkways snow- and ice-covered?
- Is there adequate lighting at night?
- Is your senior loved one at risk of wandering?
- Can your senior hear the doorbell?
Resources

- Home Instead Senior Care® Network – MakingHomeSaferforSeniors.com
- University at Buffalo Home Safety Self Assessment Tool – http://agingresearch.buffalo.edu/hssat/
- National Safety Council – nsc.org
- Canada Safety Council – canadasafetycouncil.org