



TIPS FOR PREVENTING FALLS

Just as growing older allows for a more relaxed lifestyle, it can also present new obstacles and challenges. As we age, changes in vision, hearing, strength, and balance can affect our perception of space and how we get around. According to the National Safety Council, falls are the leading cause of injury and hospital admission for older adults, and the leading cause of injury-related death among those over age 80. Each year, more than half of all falls that occur happen in the home or on home premises.** Preparing for potential hazards and taking some simple steps can help to prevent falls before they occur.

At CareFocus Companion Services, we care about the health and safety of you and your loved ones, and we want you to be secure in your home. Use our fall prevention safety checklist to spot possible safety problems which may be present in and around your home, and keep it handy as a reminder of safe practices to live by.

**The information that follows is presented for the purpose of educating the consumer on a variety of wellness and health care topics (the "Information"). Nothing contained is intended to be instructional for medical diagnosis or treatment. The Information contained is compiled from a variety of sources. The Information should not be considered complete and should not be used in place of a visit with, call to, consultation or advice from your Physician or other health care provider.

Tips for Preventing Falls*	
Questions to Ask:	Signs to Look for:
Are the floors within the home and outside easy to walk on?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Walking surfaces should remain consistent throughout the home and be slip resistant; matte-finished, textured tile, or low pile commercial carpet is the best. ✓ Make certain that any throw rugs, runners, and mats throughout the home are slip resistant, tacked, and/or taped down. ✓ Use non-skid cleaners, polishes, and waxes on floor surfaces. ✓ All entryways, steps, porches, and driveways should be well lit at night so that all areas are clearly visible. ✓ All steps and walking surfaces should be level and in good condition. ✓ Outdoor surfaces should provide good traction (textured surfaces) and be free of clutter (i.e. leaves, snow, ice). ✓ Step edges should be clearly marked and visible. ✓ Door thresholds need to be low to the ground to prevent tripping when walking in and out of the home.
Is the home easy to navigate, both indoors and outdoors?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ensure there is enough space to walk through the room and arrange furniture so that it is easy to maneuver around and not within the path of traffic. ✓ Place electrical cords along walls, not under rugs, and away from traffic areas. ✓ Keep frequently used items within reach to avoid the use of stepladders or stepstools, which can be dangerous. ✓ Keep flashlights within reach in case of a power outage.
Are the right shoes being worn?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Wear flat, comfortable, properly fitting shoes with non-skid soles at all times. ✓ Avoid walking in socks or stockings. ✓ Always keep shoelaces tied. ✓ Opt for shoes with velcro fasteners if difficulties with tying laces are experienced. ✓ Use a long-handled shoehorn to assist with putting shoes on. ✓ Keep toenails trimmed.

Checklist continued on back...

Questions to Ask:	Signs to Look for:
Are stairways safe?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Handrails should be installed on both sides of the stairs to assist with going up and down. ✓ Light switches should be located at the top and bottom of the stairs to prevent having to walk in the dark. ✓ Stair tread should be deep enough for the homeowner to place his/her whole foot. ✓ Landings of the stairs should remain rug-free.
Is the bed easy to get in and out of?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ If assistance is needed, adjustable or electric beds and mattresses are great for helping a homeowner get in and out of the bed safely. ✓ If necessary, “trapeze” bars can be installed near the bed to lend a helping hand. ✓ If mobility aids are used, they should be kept convenient and within easy reach.
Is the bathroom, including the bathtub/shower easy to navigate?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Place non-skid mat or strips on the standing area of the tub/shower to prevent accidental slipping. ✓ Install grab bars on the walls near the bathtub, as well as next to the toilet. ✓ Use shower seats or transfer benches to assist with balance while bathing. ✓ Install a hand-held showerhead with a flexible hose to minimize unnecessary movement of feet. ✓ If bath mats are used, make certain that they have skid-resistant backing or that they are tacked or taped down to prevent movement when walked on.
Are any medications being taken increasing the chances of a fall?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Take extra caution when taking multiple medications (prescription and over-the-counter). ✓ Read medication labels and talk to a doctor or pharmacist for medication side effects such as weakness, dizziness, fainting, or drowsiness. ✓ Contact a doctor before discontinuing the use of any medication and to receive any special instructions.
Are any disorders/diseases present that increase the risk of a fall?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Pay special attention to older individuals with diseases such as Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s, Multiple Sclerosis, and Osteoporosis, as they are at a higher risk of falling. ✓ Have blood pressure taken and monitored regularly; fluctuations can lead to physical imbalances. ✓ Notice any changes in vision and/or hearing, which can increase the risk of a fall.
Is the person’s overall health being taken care?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Keep active and exercise regularly to maintain strength, coordination, and balance. ✓ See a doctor for an eye examination and physical annually. ✓ Use medical equipment such as canes and walkers if necessary. ✓ Get enough sleep to avoid fatigue. ✓ Be sure to get an adequate intake of calcium and vitamin D. ✓ Avoid excessive alcohol intake and do not smoke. ✓ Maintain a proper and well-balanced daily diet. ✓ Avoid the lifting of any heavy or large items. ✓ Keep family members and friends up-to-date on health status.

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For more information or recommendations on how to ensure that your home is safe for you or your loved ones, contact CareFocus Companion Services today!

