

Preventing Falls at Home



One in three adults over 65 years old falls each year. For those over 75 years old, one quarter of the falls result in serious injury. Falls are the immediate reason for 40% of nursing home admissions. Falls are the sixth leading cause of death among people over 70 years old



Survey your living space towards removing the problems. In order to accomplish this you have to be willing to take deliberate action to change things in the home to make it a safer place for you and/or your loved one. Corrective action can take the form of removing a potential hazard, or adding a safety device to improve a problem area.

Make sure that all floor surfaces are non slip surfaces. Floors and stairs should be covered with tacked down carpeting. Area rugs; from the throw rug variety to fancy oriental's pose a hazard to the less sure footed. You want to remove as many changes in surface grade and textures on the pathway as you can on the floors, and especially in the walkways. This may mean picking up a family heirloom, or covering a beautiful wood floor. Similarly, you want to keep the walkways clear of obstacles. Obstacles include things like foot stools, shoes, magazine racks, tray tables, and waste baskets.



The lighting should be carefully evaluated. Is there sufficient illumination in the walkway? Are light switches placed so that one doesn't have to enter or exit a room in the dark? Consider night lights to light the way from bed to bathroom, and certainly consider leaving a bathroom light on during the night.

Are there grab bars in the places they are needed in the bathroom, by the toilet, in the shower, and in the bath tub?

These can be purchased at any medical supply store. Your pharmacy home improvement store may even carry the items you need. The bath/shower should have a non slip surface installed, if one is not already in place.



Do you have a shower chair? A shower chair allows the user the luxury of a shower without the fear of falling. It can afford someone the ability to shower in private with minimal assistance getting in and out. An extension on the shower head is also a good item to purchase and easy to install. If you are using the shower chair without assistance in and out of the shower, it is recommended that you make sure that the water controls are accessible while you are in the sitting position. That way, you can shut the shower, dry off, and then exit from the shower stall or bath tub.

Rearrange the closets in your bedroom so that you can avoid climbing and reaching. Again, make sure that light switches are placed so that you don't have to enter or exit a dark room. Try to avoid slippery, satiny fabrics on the bed. They may look and feel nice, but they can become a slippery hazard in the middle of the night when you make that half sleeping visit to the bathroom.



These modifications to the home can allow older and infirm individuals to remain in the comfortable surroundings of their own home in a dignified fashion, while adding to their safety and comfort.

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