**Fall Proof Your Home**

**Fall-Proofing Your Home**

Six out of every 10 falls happen at home, where we spend much of our time and tend to move around without thinking about our safety. There are many changes you can make to your home that will help you avoid falls and ensure your safety.

**In Stairways, Hallways, and Pathways**

* Have handrails on both sides of the stairs, and make sure they are tightly fastened. Hold the handrails when you use the stairs, going up or down. If you must carry something while you're on the stairs, hold it in one hand and use the handrail with the other. Don't let what you're carrying block your view of the steps.
* Make sure there is good lighting with light switches at the top and bottom of stairs and on each end of a long hall. Remember to use the lights!
* Keep areas where you walk tidy*. Don't leave books, papers, clothes, and shoes on the floor or stairs.*
* Check that all carpets are fixed firmly to the floor so they won't slip. *Put no-slip strips on tile and wooden floors. You can buy these strips at the hardware store.*
* Don't use throw rugs or small area rugs.

**In Bathrooms and Powder Rooms**

* Mount grab bars near toilets and on both the inside and outside of your tub and shower. ***Do not use the toilet paper roll as a lever to push yourself up when trying to get up from the toilet seat.***
* Place non-skid mats, strips, or carpet on all surfaces that may get wet.
* Remember to turn on night lights.

**In Your Bedroom**

* Put night lights and light switches close to your bed.
* Keep a flashlight by your bed in case the power is out and you need to get up.
* Keep your telephone near your bed.

**In Other Living Areas**

* Keep electric cords and telephone wires near walls and away from walking paths.
* Secure all carpets and large area rugs firmly to the floor.
* Arrange your furniture (especially low coffee tables) and other objects so they are not in your way when you walk.
* Make sure your sofas and chairs are the right height for you to get in and out of them easily.
* Don't walk on newly washed floors—they are slippery.
* Keep items you use often within easy reach.
* Don't stand on a chair or table to reach something that's too high—use a "reach stick" instead or ask for help. Reach sticks are special grabbing tools that you can buy at many hardware or medical-supply stores. If you use a step stool, make sure it is steady and has a handrail on top. Have someone stand next to you.
* Don't let your cat or dog trip you. Know where your pet is whenever you're standing or walking.
* Keep emergency numbers in large print near each telephone.

If you have fallen, your doctor might suggest that an occupational therapist, physical therapist, or nurse visit your home. These healthcare providers can assess your home's safety and advise you about making changes to prevent falls.

**Your Own Medical Alarm**

If you’re concerned about falling, think about getting an emergency response system. If you fall or need emergency help, you push a button on a special necklace or bracelet to alert 911. There is a fee for this service, and it is not usually covered by insurance. ***There are two different types of technologies… Bluetooth and cellular. What is the difference?***

**Home Improvements Prevent Falls**

Many State and local governments have education and/or home modification programs to help older people prevent falls. Check with your local health department, or local [Area Agency on Aging](https://www.n4a.org/) to see if there is a program near you.

[Read more about falls and falls prevention](https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/prevent-falls-and-fractures).

Read about [this topic in Spanish](https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/caidas-y-fracturas). Lea sobre [este tema en español](https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/caidas-y-fracturas).

**For More Information About Falls and Falls Prevention**

**National Resource Center on Supportive Housing and Home Modifications**
213-740-1364
homemods@usc.edu
[www.homemods.org](http://www.homemods.org/)

**Rebuilding Together**
800-473-4229
info@rebuildingtogether.org
[www.rebuildingtogether.org](http://www.rebuildingtogether.org/)

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**
800-232-4636
888-232-6348 (TTY)
cdcinfo@cdc.gov
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov/)

**National Center for Injury Prevention and Control**
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
800-232-4636
888-232-6348 (TTY)
cdcinfo@cdc.gov
[www.cdc.gov/injury](https://www.cdc.gov/injury/)

**National Falls Prevention Resource Center**
571-527-3900
[www.ncoa.org/center-for-healthy-aging/falls-resource-center/](http://www.ncoa.org/center-for-healthy-aging/falls-resource-center/)

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**Fall prevention: Simple tips to prevent falls**

Falls put you at risk of serious injury. Prevent falls with these simple fall prevention measures, from reviewing your medications to hazard-proofing your home.

[By Mayo Clinic Staff](https://www.mayoclinic.org/about-this-site/meet-our-medical-editors)

Fall prevention is an important topic to consider as you get older. Physical changes and health conditions — and sometimes the medications used to treat those conditions — make falls more likely as you age. In fact, falls are a leading cause of injury among older adults. Still, fear of falling doesn't need to rule your life. Instead, consider six simple fall prevention strategies.

**1. Make an appointment with your health care provider**

Start by making an appointment with your health care provider. To assess your risk and discuss fall prevention strategies, your health care provider may want to talk about the following:

* **Your medications.** Make a list of your prescription and nonprescription medications and supplements, or bring them with you to the appointment. Your health care provider can review your medications for side effects and interactions that may increase your risk of falling. To help with fall prevention, your health care provider may consider weaning you off medications that make you tired or affect your thinking, such as sedatives, antihistamines and some types of antidepressants.
* **Any previous falls.** Write down the details, including when, where and how you fell. Be prepared to discuss instances when you almost fell but were caught by someone or managed to grab hold of something just in time. Details such as these may help your health care provider identify specific fall prevention strategies.
* **Your health conditions.** Certain eye and ear disorders may increase your risk of falls. Be prepared to discuss your health conditions and how comfortable you are when you walk — for example, do you feel any dizziness, joint pain, shortness of breath, or numbness in your feet and legs when you walk? Your health care provider may evaluate your muscle strength, balance and walking style (gait) as well.

**2. Keep moving**

Physical activity can go a long way toward fall prevention. With your health care provider's OK, consider activities such as walking, water workouts or tai chi — a gentle exercise that involves slow and graceful dance-like movements. These activities reduce the risk of falls by improving strength, balance, coordination and flexibility.

If you avoid physical activity because you're afraid it will make a fall more likely, tell your health care provider. Your provider may recommend carefully monitored exercise programs or refer you to a physical therapist. The physical therapist can create a custom exercise program aimed at improving your balance, flexibility and muscle strength.

**3. Wear sensible shoes**

Consider changing your footwear as part of your fall prevention plan. High heels, floppy slippers and shoes with slick soles can make you slip, stumble and fall. So can walking in your stocking feet. Instead, wear properly fitting, sturdy, flat shoes with nonskid soles. Sensible shoes may also reduce joint pain.

**4. Remove home hazards**

Take a look around your home for potential fall hazards. To make your home safer:

* Remove boxes, newspapers, electrical cords and phone cords from walkways.
* Move coffee tables, magazine racks and plant stands from high-traffic areas.
* Secure loose rugs with double-faced tape, tacks or a slip-resistant backing — or remove loose rugs from your home.
* Repair loose, wooden floorboards and carpeting right away.
* Store clothing, dishes, food and other necessities within easy reach.
* Immediately clean spilled liquids, grease or food.
* Use nonslip mats in your bathtub or shower. Use a bath seat, which allows you to sit while showering.

**5. Light up your living space**

Keep your home brightly lit to avoid tripping on objects that are hard to see. Also:

* Place night lights in your bedroom, bathroom and hallways.
* Place a lamp within reach of your bed in case you need to get up in the middle of the night.
* Make clear paths to light switches that aren't near room entrances. Consider trading traditional switches for glow-in-the-dark or illuminated switches.
* Turn on the lights before going up or down stairs.
* Store flashlights in easy-to-find places in case of power outages.

**6. Use assistive devices**

Your health care provider might recommend using a cane or walker to keep you steady. Other assistive devices can help, too. For example:

* Handrails for both sides of stairways
* Nonslip treads for bare-wood steps
* A raised toilet seat or one with armrests
* Grab bars for the shower or tub
* A sturdy plastic seat for the shower or tub — plus a hand-held shower nozzle for bathing while sitting down

If necessary, ask your health care provider for a referral to an occupational therapist. An occupational therapist can help you brainstorm other fall prevention strategies. Some solutions are easily installed and relatively inexpensive. Others may require professional help or a larger investment. If you're concerned about the cost, remember that an investment in fall prevention is an investment in your independence.

SOURCE: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/healthy-aging/in-depth/fall-prevention/art-20047358>

**18 Steps to Fall Proofing Your Home**

Sep 01, 2017

[**Scott Trudeau**](https://www.ncoa.org/author/scott-trudeau)

Productive Aging Practice Manager at the American Occupational Therapy Association

Key Takeaways

* More than 75% of falls take place inside or in close proximity to the home, but your home doesn’t have to be an obstacle course of potential falls.
* Some simple and quick changes will easily help reduce your risk of [falling.](https://fe.qa.ncoa.org/older-adults/health/prevention/falls-prevention)
* Review these 18 steps for fall proofing your home and get started today.

*The front door*

* **Check your front steps.** If you have steps at the entrance of your home, make sure they are not broken or uneven. Try to fix damage, such as cracks or wobbly steps, as soon as possible.
* **Check the lighting around your front door.** Make sure all entryways are well lit so you can see where you are stepping. It’s best if you can have motion sensor lights, so you don’t have to worry about turning lights on yourself. Plus, they can save you money on energy costs.
* **Consider installing a grab bar.** Putting grab bars on one side of your door can provide balance while you’re putting the key in the door, or stepping up once you have the door open, especially if you are carrying bags or the steps are slick.

*Kitchen*

* **Move your most commonly used items within reach.** Put the kitchen items you use every day—like plates, glasses, or even seasonings—on the lowest shelves. This will help you avoid using stepstools and chairs—things you can easily lose your balance on—to reach items on higher shelves. Plan a head for special needs. Ask a loved one or visitor for help every few months or so to rotate seasonal items to within reach – for example baking dishes that are only used at holiday time.
* **Replace scatter rugs with rubber backed rugs.** Scatter rugs or area rugs are tripping hazards. If you prefer to have a mat on the floor near the sink or stove, make sure it is placed securely on the floor and doesn’t have turned corners or edges that you could trip on. The best rugs have heavy-backed rubber bottoms so they stay in place.
* **Clean up spills immediately.** Kitchen floors can be slippery and very dangerous when wet! Keep a hand towel within easy reach to help you clean up spills easily and quickly.

*Stairs*

* **Keep steps clutter-free.** Give yourself a clear path up and down by making sure things like shoes and books are put away and not left sitting on steps.
* **Add strips of contrasting color to help visualize your stairs better.** Adding colored tape to the edges of each step will help differentiate monochromatic steps. Pick a color of tape that will stand out against the color of the stairs. Make sure to put the tape on the top and over the edge of each step.
* **Try to have lighting at the top and bottom of the stairs.** Overhead lights at the top and bottom are ideal. A light switch at the top and bottom of the stairs keeps you prepared no matter which direction you’re going.
* **Add a second handrail.** Most staircases only have one rail, but handrails on both sides will help keep you balanced. It’s important to make sure they are both installed securely so that they will support you.

*Hallway*

* **Check your lighting, but don’t change the bulbs yourself.** Good lighting is key in all areas of the home, but don’t get a chair or stepladder to change out-of-reach high bulbs. Ask your family members, friends, or neighbors when needed and consider LED bulbs to help reduce the number of times you have to address this issue. They last longer and can save you money in the long run.

*Bedroom*

* **Make sure the light near the bed is easy to reach.** If you have to get up in the night, you know you’re just a click away from better visibility.
* **Keep the path from your bed to the bathroom clear.** Make sure it is well lit and clutter free. Place nightlights along the route, so you can see where you’re walking. Some night-lights have sensors and go on by themselves after dark or in response to motion.
* **Consider installing a bed rail.** There are railings that fit easily between your mattress and box spring and can provide support when you are getting in and out of bed. The bed rail is also good for times when you go from lying/sitting/standing, and the change of position makes you dizzy. Having something to hold onto will keep you steady while your body adjusts.
* **Move the phone within arm’s reach of your bed.** You might need help in the middle of the night, so having a phone nearby is a safe option.

*Bathroom*

* **Add a non-slip rubber mat to the shower or tub.** The traction of the mat or rubber self-stick strips will help keep you from slipping when stepping on the wet surfaces.
* **Install grab bars by the toilet and tub.** The hard surfaces of the bathroom can make falling even more dangerous. Having properly installed grab bars around the toilet and tub provide needed support and balance. Remember, towel racks aren’t grab bars, but grab bars can be towel racks. Grab bars should be installed by a professional to make sure they are at the correct levels and properly anchored to the walls. The [National Association of Home Builders](https://www.nahb.org/education-and-events/education/designations/Certified-Aging-in-Place-Specialist-CAPS) has Certified Aging-in-Place Specialists who work in many communities. If you cannot find a certified professional, then check with your local [Area Agency on Aging](https://eldercare.acl.gov/Public/Index.aspx) for a list of handymen who can help with installation.
* **Consider a shower chair and a hand-held shower head.** These can help you avoid reaching or straining during your shower.

Find an occupational therapist for advice

Occupational therapists help you continue doing the things you want and need to do every day. Occupational therapists ask, "What matters to you?" not "What's the matter with you?" When it comes to falls, they can assess your home environment to identify hazards and suggest ways to improve the fit between your home and your activities to keep you safer.

When purchasing equipment for your home, like grab bars, ramps, etc., it’s important to keep in mind that not every toilet, doorway, etc. is made equal. It’s not always as simple as going to your local hardware store or pharmacy and asking a clerk for assistance—sometimes you need an expert, and that’s where an occupational therapist can help.

Reminders

When assessing your home, remember to look for these three things:

1. Good lighting
2. Clutter
3. Easy access to the things you use the most

Also, keep in mind that you always want three points of contact no matter what you are doing. If you are walking up steps or maneuvering in and out of your shower, for example, you want to have two hands and one foot or two feet and one hand in contact with something sturdy.

If you do not own your home, talk with your landlord about making these changes. They will often work with you to get accommodations in place. Don’t assume just because you are renting that you can’t make the necessary changes you need to stay falls free.

We all have the tendency to put things off, especially when we are thinking about preventing a problem that hasn't happened yet. This can be a problem, so I challenge you to make at least one change right now that will help prevent a fall in your home.

SOURCE: <https://www.ncoa.org/article/18-steps-to-fall-proofing-your-home>