

Check List For Safety

Preventing Falls In The Home

Falls

Falls At Home

- Each year thousands of Americans are injured by falls in the home. In 1996, more than 8,500 people over age 65 died because of falls.
- Falls are often due to hazards that are commonly overlooked. Most are easy for the average homeowner to fix.

Falls At Home

- This is a checklist to help you identify hazards room by room.
- After each hazard is identified, we'll offer a fix for each of the problems.

Floors

- Look at the floors in each room.
 - Q. When you walk through a room, do you have to walk around furniture?
 - A. Ask someone to move the furniture so your path is clear.
 - Q. Do you have throw rugs on the floor?
 - A. Remove the rugs or use double sided tape or a non-slip backing so the rugs won't slip.

Floors

- Q. Are papers, magazines, books, shoes, boxes, blankets, towels, or other objects on the floor?
- A. Pick up things that are on the floor. Always keep objects off the floor.
- Q. Do you have to walk over or around cords or wire (like cords from lamps, extension cords, or telephone cords)?
- A. Coil or tape cords and wires next to the wall so you can't trip over them. Have an electrician put in another outlet.

Stairs and Steps

- Look at the stairs you use both inside and outside your home.
 - Q. Are papers, shoes, books or other objects on the stairs?
 - A. Pick up things on the stairs. Always keep objects off the stairs.
 - Q Are some steps broken or uneven?
 - A. Fix loose or uneven steps.

Stairs and Steps

- Q. Are you missing a light over the stairway?
- A. Have a handyman or an electrician put in an overhead light at the top and bottom of the stairs.
- Q. Has the stairway light bulb burned out?
- A. Have a friend or family member change the light bulb.
- Q. Do you have only one light switch for your stairs (only at the top or at the bottom of the stairs)?
- A. Have an electrician install a switch at the other location. You can get switches that glow in the dark.

Stairs and Steps

- Q. Are the handrails loose or broken? Is there a handrail on only one side?
- A. Fix loose handrails or put in new ones. Make sure handrails are on both sides of the stairs and are as long as the stairs.
- Q. Is the carpet on the steps loose or torn?
- A. Make sure the carpet is firmly attached to every step or remove the carpet and attach non-slip rubber treads on the stairs.

Kitchen

- Look at your kitchen and eating area.
 - Q. Are the things you use often on high shelves?
 - A. Rearrange your cabinets. Keep things you use often on a lower shelf (about waist high).
 - Q. Is your step stool unsteady?
 - A. Get a new, steady step stool with a bar to hold on to. Never use a chair as a step stool.

Bedrooms

- Look at all your bedrooms.
 - Q. Is the light near the bed hard to reach?
 - A. Place a lamp close to the bed where it is easy to reach.
 - Q. Is the path from your bed to the bathroom dark?
 - A. Use a night-light so you can see where you're walking. Purchase a night-light that turns on and off automatically.

Bathrooms

- Look at all your bathrooms.
 - Q. Is the tub or shower floor slippery?
 - A. Put a non-slip rubber mat or self-stick strips on the floor of the tub or shower.
 - Q. Do you have some support when you get in and out of the tub or up from the toilet?
 - A. Have a handyman or family put a grab bar inside the tub and next to the toilet.

Other Things You Can Do to Prevent Falls

- Exercise regularly. Exercise makes you stronger and improves your balance and coordination.
- Have your doctor or pharmacist look at a list of all your medications (remember over-the-counter drugs). Some medications can make you sleepy or dizzy.
- Have your vision checked at least once a year by an eye doctor. Poor vision can increase your risk of falling.
- Get up slowly after you sit or lie down.

More Things to Try

- Wear sturdy shoes with thin, non-slip soles. Avoid socks, slippers and running shoes with thick soles.
- Increase lighting in your home. Use brighter light bulbs (at least 60 watts). Use lamp shades or frosted bulbs to reduce glare.
- Use reflective tape at the top and bottom of the stairs so you can see them better.
- Paint doorsills a different color to prevent tripping.

Other Safety Tips

- Keep emergency numbers in large print near each phone.
- Keep a phone that you can reach near the floor in case you fall and can't get up.
- Think about wearing an alarm device that will bring help in case you fall and need assistance.
- Keep a list of doctors, medicines, allergies and next of kin on the refrigerator for rescue workers should you need assistance or medical care. Vital-Paks are available free from the WS Police and the Forsyth County Sheriff's Department.

Making Repairs On a Fixed Income

- Often relatives spend hours trying to pick out the perfect gift for a birthday or holiday. Help them out by making a list of small jobs around your house or apartment that they can do to improve safety.
- If there are needs that you can't afford, such as repairs, installation of handicapped ramps or widening doorways, grants and low interest loans are available to persons on fixed income through City of Winston-Salem Housing-Neighborhood Services, (336)-727-8486.