



# A Guide to **Fall Prevention**



**Let's start talking about living.®**



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## Around the House

As we age, balance becomes a significant issue due to a variety of factors, including physical weakness, medications and cognitive or visual impairment. Ideally, a source of comfort for us, our home can become hazardous without a fall-preventive strategy. Right at Home can assess your house for anything that might be a health risk. In addition to a professional home safety check, you can increase your safety by:

- Finding someone to check on you regularly.
- Discussing medications with your physician.
- Establishing light-exercise routines.
- Scheduling vision checks.
- Checking their balance.
- Ensuring adequate lighting throughout home, especially in high traffic areas.
- De-cluttering the home of any loose items such as rugs or electrical cords.

# 95%

of all hip fractures are caused by falling, usually by falling sideways\*

\*National Council on Aging



# The Bedroom

## Getting Out of Bed, Reaching/Bending For Closet Items and Getting Up From Chairs

| Risk Factors                                 |  |
|--|--|
| ➤ Poor Lighting                              | ➤ Uneven or loose flooring                 |
| ➤ Electrical cords across the floor          | ➤ Decorative pillows and oversized bedding |
| ➤ Beds/chairs that don't support safe egress | ➤ Bed skirts or other items that hang low  |
| ➤ Obstacles in pathways                      | ➤ Sliding throw rugs                       |

| Prevention   |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure a light is within easy arm's reach of the bed, and use nightlights to illuminate the path from the bed to the bathroom | <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid rearranging bedroom furniture so people with limited vision do not stumble over objects and fall               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Provide bright light making it easier to avoid obstacles and furnishings  | <input type="checkbox"/> Rearrange lights and electronics along the walls and out of pathways   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Remove clutter so paths are wide, straight and clear  | <input type="checkbox"/> Remove throw rugs from pathways or secure them with non-slip backing   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Position closet shelves between waist and shoulder high to avoid excessive bending/reaching                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure proper bed height (when sitting on edge of bed, your knees should be 90 degrees with both feet flat on floor) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Provide stable chairs with sturdy armrests to help those who are weak   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other  |

# The Bathroom

## Getting In and Out of the Tub and Shower

| Risk Factors                                   |   |
|--|---|
| ▶ Slippery floor surfaces                      | ▶ Poor lighting (especially at night)                           |
| ▶ Slippery hand-support surfaces (top of sink) | ▶ Bathroom door opens inward (difficult to access fallen elder) |
| ▶ Towel bars used for balance support          |   |

1/3

of aged adults fall each year, and among older adults, falls are the leading cause of both **fatal and nonfatal injuries**\*

\*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



| Prevention  |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use of non-slip tiles and removal of rugs                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Remove door locks                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Replace towel bars with grab bars (color contrast)           | <input type="checkbox"/> Remove all cords and loose wiring from walkway |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Increase general and task lighting, including floor lighting | <input type="checkbox"/> If plumbing allows, add hand-held shower       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bathroom door opens outwards or install sliding pocket door  |   |

## Moving About

| Risk Factors                    |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| ➤ Slippery floor surfaces       | ➤ Towels or slippery rugs on floor                           |
| ➤ Lack of supportive grab bars  | ➤ Stepping in and out of tub or shower onto slippery surface |
| ➤ Towel bars used as a grab bar |  |

| Prevention   |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grab bars with color contrast                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Shower chair/transfer bench           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Non-slip mats/decals/strips on floor, in tub and shower | <input type="checkbox"/> Wall-attached soap/shampoo dispensers |

## Toileting

| Risk Factors          |                          |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| ➤ Nighttime toileting | ➤ Hurrying to the toilet |
| ➤ Poor lighting       |                          |

| Prevention   |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Toilet grab bars (bars that attach to toilet are preferable to wall-attached bars for those with good arm strength) | <input type="checkbox"/> Bedside commode  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Toilet riser to make it easier for those with decreased arm strength to stand up                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Nightlights or floor lighting between bed and bathroom |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nightlights inside and outside the bathroom   |   |

# Hallways

## Walking

| Risk Factors   |
|--|
| ➤ Poor lighting  |
| ➤ Obstacles in pathways  |
| ➤ Sliding throw rugs   |
| ➤ Upended carpet edges   |
| ➤ Electrical cords across the hallway floor                        |
| ➤ Handrails absent or handrails that don't support walking balance |

| Prevention   |
|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rearrange lights along the walls and out of pathways                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Remove clutter or furnishings in pathways                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Remove or secure throw rugs with non-slip backing                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Provide bright lighting making it easier to avoid obstacles         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Install sturdy handrails for balance support                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Repair any loose or uneven flooring and eliminate raised thresholds |



In the elderly, **30-50%** of falls are due to **environmental causes** such as poor lighting, slippery floors, and uneven surfaces.\*

\*Aging.com



**1/5**

falls result in serious injury.

\*National Council on Aging



**70%** of falls occur on hard surfaces\*

\*Outdoor Falls Among Middle-Aged and Older Adults: A Neglected Public Health Problem | [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1483851/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1483851/)

# The Living Room

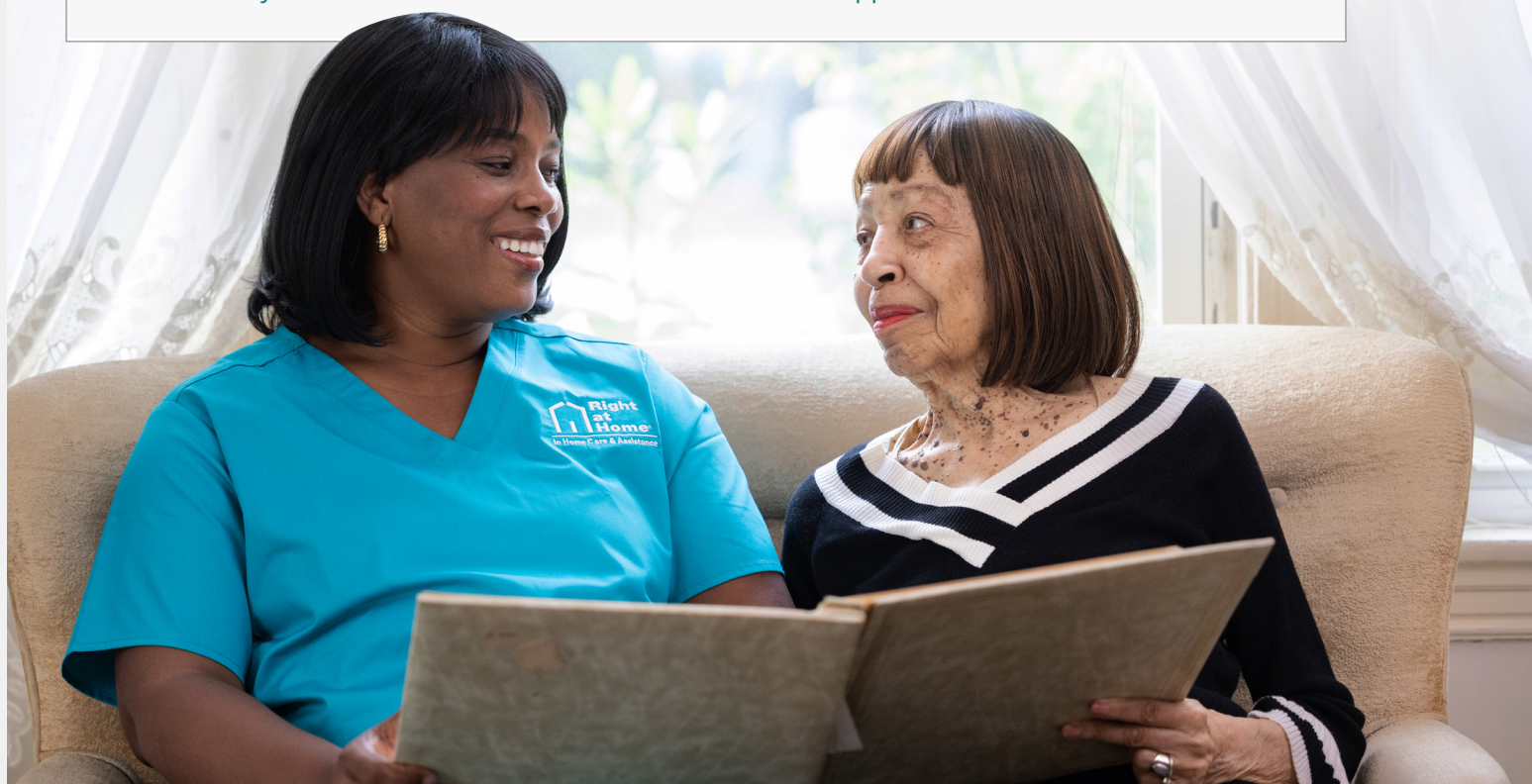
## Getting up from sofas and chairs

### Risk Factors

- ▶ Sofas and soft chairs don't support safe transition
- ▶ Upended carpet edges
- ▶ Smooth, slippery floors such as vinyl or wood
- ▶ Electrical cords across the floor

### Prevention

- Rearrange lights and electronics along the walls and out of pathways
- Remove sliding throw rugs or secure them with non-slip backing
- Install floor lighting
- Tape down or mend upended carpet edges
- Remove clutter
- Create wide, straight and clear paths
- Relocate low-lying tables that may be difficult to see
- Provide sofas with armrests to support safe transitions



# Steps

## Walking up and down steps

| Risk Factors                          |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| ➤ Lack of handrail support            | ➤ Carrying loads, unable to see steps            |
| ➤ Lack of lighting                    | ➤ Wearing socks, making it easy to slip on steps |
| ➤ Steps/step coverings in poor repair | ➤ Not using handrails                            |
| ➤ Hurrying up/down steps              | ➤ Other  |

| Prevention  |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Install rounded handrails on both sides of steps that extend beyond top and bottom step so you know you are on solid footing | <input type="checkbox"/> Repair faulty steps and loose carpet  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Install brighter or additional stairway lighting and check for shadows that may cause visual confusion                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Install carpet or non-slip rubber treads on each step                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Provide lighting at the top and bottom of steps where most falls occur   | <input type="checkbox"/> Change potentially accident-prone stairway activity (e.g., grasp handrails) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Consider installing stair lights to illuminate the path  | <input type="checkbox"/> Wear supportive footwear with slip-resistant soles                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Relocate low-lying tables that may be difficult to see   |  |

# The Kitchen

Reaching and bending for objects on shelves, slipping on wet flooring and getting up from kitchen chairs that slide or aren't equipped with arm-rest support

## Risk Factors

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| ➤ Too high or low shelf and cabinet heights | ➤ Objects on high shelves and cabinets                   |
| ➤ Slippery floor surfaces                   | ➤ Climbing on unsteady stools and chairs to obtain items |
| ➤ Unstable chairs                           |  |

## Prevention

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Place a water-absorbent, non-skid mat in front of the sink  | <input type="checkbox"/> Clean up spills immediately   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use kitchen chairs with arms to allow you to sit and stand up more easily                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Stay off freshly mopped floors  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Never keep wheeled chairs in the kitchen  | <input type="checkbox"/> Remove sliding throw rugs or secure them with non-slip backing  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Store frequently-used and heavy items within easy reach in a cabinet or shelf between your waist and shoulder | <input type="checkbox"/> Ask for help whenever possible with tasks like changing light bulbs and retrieving things from high shelves rather than relying on the step stool |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Consider using a Lazy Susan if cabinet/shelf space is limited   | <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid using step stools but use a sturdy step stool with a handle for balance support when necessary  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Provide adequate lighting   |  |

# Outside

## Walking Outside

| Risk Factors  |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Uneven sidewalks and street surfaces, curbs and slippery surfaces</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Parking lots and garages with short curbs placed at the end of parking spaces</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Porches with slippery surfaces</li> </ul>                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Poor outdoor lighting</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Parks can have uneven surfaces and wet grass</li> </ul>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Vision problems or glare from sun</li> </ul>   |

| Prevention  |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Install good lighting on stairs and walkways</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Ensure steps, patios and porches are maintained to avoid loose or broken boards and uneven surface</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Ensure adequate lighting on perimeter of house</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Be aware of changes in terrain such as steps, holes, uneven areas and obstacles in pathways</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Cover walk areas such as porches and steps with weatherproof and textured paint for more traction</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Check the height of curbs and steps before stepping up on them or down from them. Curbs with inclines or cutaways for bikes can be misleading.</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Add abrasive strips or rubber stair treads, or use deck paint that has a rough texture</li> </ul>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Watch for short curbs, wet areas and uneven surfaces in garages</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Keep steps, sidewalks, decks and porches free of obstacles and debris</li> </ul>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Wear correct eyewear when walking. Reading glasses or bifocals can distort potential hazards</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Always use handrails when stepping on stairs</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Install handrails that are graspable for outdoor steps.</li> </ul>  |

# Outside, cont.

## Walking Outside

| Risk Factors  |   |
|---|---|
| ▶ Loose or uneven sidewalks, steps and driveways  | ▶ Inclement weather creating unsafe conditions (e.g., ice, snow accumulation, mud, etc.)                    |
| ▶ Inadequate or lack of stair railings  | ▶ Overgrown shrubs and tree branches  |
| ▶ Patio or deck furniture in walkways   | ▶ Wearing improper footwear   |
| Prevention  |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Make sure stairs are even, in good shape and well lit.                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Walk on grass if sidewalks or driveways appear slippery or uneven                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Paint the edges of the steps with a color that contrasts with the rest of the stairway | <input type="checkbox"/> Hire or ask someone to help with shoveling, yard work and pruning shrubs and trees |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Install sturdy railings around deck and patio areas                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Remove protruding tree roots and repair loose concrete areas on driveways          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Replace steps with ramp access, as needed  | <input type="checkbox"/> Wear shoes that are well fitted and have no-slip traction soles.                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure outdoor furniture is out of the walkway   |   |

Approximately **50%** of falls among adults aged 65+ occur in outdoor environments.\*

\*Journal of the American Geriatric Society





**Call today for an in-home visit  
or for more information.**

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