



## Remembering When:

### Home Safety Checklist

People age 65 and older are especially vulnerable to falls and fires in the home. This checklist can be used by older adults to check their homes for hazards. It can also be used by a home health care worker,

visiting nurse, volunteer, relative, or friend to help an older adult identify hazardous situations in the home, discuss possible solutions, and reinforce fall and fire prevention messages.

## Fall Prevention

### EXERCISE

- Do you exercise regularly?*  
Exercise regularly to build your strength and improve balance and coordination. Ask your doctor or other health care provider about the best physical exercise for you.

### TAKE YOUR TIME

- Do you rush to answer the phone or doorbell?*  
Take your time. Being rushed or distracted increases your chance of falling. Get out of chairs slowly. Sit a moment before you get out of your bed. Stand and get your balance before you walk.

### CLEAR THE WAY

- Are there tripping hazards such as papers, books, electrical cords or shoes on the floor in walking areas and stairways?*  
Pick up the clutter. Always keep objects off the stairs.
- In winter, are sidewalks, outdoor steps, and walkways clear of ice and snow?*  
Keep the walkways clear. If needed, ask for help with snow and ice removal.

### LOOK OUT FOR YOURSELF

- Have you had your eyes checked?*  
See an eye specialist once a year. Poor vision can increase your chance of falling.

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*Do you have night lights along the path between your bedroom and the bathroom?*  
Night lights are the easiest and least expensive way to light the way.

*Do you turn on the lights before you use the stairs?*  
You need to have light switches at both the top and bottom of your stairs. If needed, ask for help installing new light switches. Never climb stairs in the dark.

*Does every room have a light switch that can be reached from the doorway?*  
If not, ask for help installing new light switches.

### **PREVENT SLIPPING**

*Are there non-slip bath mats in bathtubs and showers?*  
Use non-slip bath mats to prevent slips and falls.

*Do you have grab bars in tubs, showers, and near all toilets?*  
Grab bars should be installed in all bathrooms. Never use a towel rack or shower rod for support.

*Do you wipe up spilled liquids right away?*  
Spills make your floors slippery; even a few drops of liquid or grease can be a slipping hazard.

### **UNEVEN SURFACES**

*Do your throw rugs have rubber, non-skid backing?*  
Use only throw rugs with non-skid backing. Smooth out all wrinkles and folds in your rugs and carpets.

*Is your carpeting wrinkled, torn, or worn?*  
If so, ask for help repairing or replacing the carpeting.

### **TREAD CAREFULLY**

*Are there sturdy, easy-to-grip handrails on both sides of the stairs?*  
If not, ask for help securing loose handrails to the wall, or installing new handrails along the full length of both sides of the stairs.

### **BEST FOOT FORWARD**

*Do you wear high heels, loose shoes, or slippers?*  
Wear sturdy, well-fitted, low-heeled shoes with non-slip soles. These are safer than high heels, thick-soled athletic shoes, slippers, or stocking feet.

*Do you take any medications?*  
Have your doctor or pharmacist review all of your medications, including over-the-counter drugs. Some medications can affect your balance and coordination.

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# Fire Prevention

## IF YOU SMOKE...

- If you or anyone in your household smokes, what kind of ashtrays do you use?*  
Large, deep, non-tip ashtrays are best. Wet cigarette butts and ashes before emptying into a wastebasket.
- What are your smoking habits?*  
If you smoke, smoke outside. Never smoke when you are drowsy, feeling the affects of alcohol or medication, lying down, or in bed.

## GIVE SPACE HEATERS SPACE

- How far are your space heaters and portable heaters from things that can burn?*  
Keep anything that can burn, including yourself, at least three feet (one meter) from space heaters, portable heaters, and woodstoves. You should turn off and unplug heaters when you leave your home or go to bed.

## ELECTRICAL SAFETY

- Do you have cracked or frayed electrical cords in your home?*  
Unplug them at once. Have them repaired or replaced.
- Are there any electrical cords running across doorways or under rugs?*  
Unplug them at once and move them to a safer location.

## BE KITCHEN WISE

- What do you wear when you cook?*  
To avoid catching your clothes on fire, wear clothing with tight-fitting, rolled-up, or short sleeves. Use oven mitts to handle hot pans.
- Do you know what to do if your clothes catch on fire?*  
Stop (don't run), drop gently to the ground, cover your face with your hands, and roll over and over or back and forth to smother the flames. If you can't "stop, drop, and roll", smother the flames with a towel or blanket.
- What should you do if you burn yourself?*  
Immerse the burn in cool water for 3 to 5 minutes. Get medical assistance immediately. Never put butter or any other grease on a burn.
- Do you know how to put out a pan fire?*  
Slide a lid over the pan, then turn off the burner.
- Do you stay in the kitchen when you cook?*  
Never leave cooking unattended. Use a timer to remind you to check your cooking. Don't use the stove if you are drowsy or feeling the affects of alcohol or medication.

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- Do you use a microwave oven?*  
Remember that while microwave ovens stay cool, the food inside can become very hot. To avoid a steam burn, use caution when removing covers or plastic wrap from food.

## **SMOKE ALARMS SAVE LIVES**

- Do you have at least one smoke alarm on every level of your home and outside each sleeping area?*  
If not, ask for help installing alarms. A fire can begin anywhere in your home and grow very quickly. In a fire you need the early warning provided by working smoke alarms to get out of your home safely. If you are deaf or hard-of-hearing, consider purchasing alarms with flashing lights.

- Do you test your smoke alarms?*  
Test your alarms by pushing the test button at least once a month. Batteries should be changed at least once a year, or whenever the alarm “chirps” to tell you that the battery power is low. Any smoke alarm that is 10 years old should be replaced.

## **PLAN AND PRACTICE YOUR ESCAPE**

- What should you do if there is a fire in your home?*  
Get out as quickly as you can and don't go back inside for any reason. Once outside, call the fire department from a neighbour's phone or a cell phone.

- Do you know two ways out of every room?*  
Make sure you can open all doors and windows easily. Security bars should be equipped with quick-release devices. Make sure furniture and other heavy objects are not blocking your exits. If you must escape through smoke, stay low – the cleaner air is near the floor.

- Do you have limited mobility?*  
If possible, your bedroom should be located on the first floor of your home so that you can escape faster during an emergency.

## **KNOW YOUR LOCAL EMERGENCY NUMBER**

- Do you know the emergency number to call in case of fire?*  
Memorize the number; because once you escape, you'll need to call the fire department from a neighbour's phone.

## **CONSIDER YOUR ABILITIES**

- Do you have limited mobility?*  
Develop your escape plan around your abilities and practice to make sure you can do it. Teach everyone in your household (and your neighbours) what assistance you may need.

- Do you have a telephone in your bedroom?*  
Having a telephone in your bedroom is a good idea in case you are trapped by fire.



Information provided by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)  
and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

