

Fall prevention checklist

Here are tips for making your environment more safe so that you can avoid falls and stay fracture-free. Keep this checklist visible on your refrigerator door or desk as a regular reminder. Review it when you're doing weekly housecleaning or planning seasonal home improvement projects.

Shed some light

- Make sure you have good lighting inside and outside of your home, especially on walk ways and at the top and bottom of stairs. Add new fixtures or use higher-watt bulbs as appropriate.
- Put nightlights in your hallways, especially between your bedroom and bathroom, or your bedroom and kitchen — whatever your most common “nighttime” routes are.

De-clutter

- Remove any “piles” of magazines, boxes or other stuff you've left sitting out, whether they're on your floors, steps or furniture. Get into the habit of filing or storing the stuff you want to keep right away — and throwing the rest away.
- Avoid stretching telephone, electrical, and extension cords long distances in your rooms. Tuck cords behind furniture and along baseboards — definitely out of your walking areas.

Get a grip

- If you don't have railings and handrails in key places, arrange to have them installed. If you have railings but they're not as sturdy as they could be, have them repaired or replaced.
- Use rugs and carpets that have “nonskid” backing so they'll “grip” your floors and stay in place. Use non-slip rubber mats in the tub and shower mats.

Keep it clean

- Wipe up food or liquid spills promptly, even little ones, and dry the areas thoroughly. If you wax your floors, use a nonskid wax.
- Consider installing “grab bars” in your bathroom's tub/shower and toilet areas.

Safety first

- As comfortable as slippers may be, they're not the safest footwear for walking around or doing household chores. Instead, wear shoes with thin, non-skid soles and low heels.
- Don't stand on chairs or other “make do” items when you need to reach higher shelves. Use a solid step stool, preferably with safety treads and handrails.

Re-decorate

- Arrange your furniture so that you have clear, wide pathways between rooms. Place stands, tables, footrests and planters out of the way.
- Repair or get rid of “wobbly” furniture. Don't sit in couches or chairs that are too low or lean back too far, which can make it difficult for you to stand up safely.