

Staying Independent

A Falls Prevention Checklist



Stay Active, Stay Independent and Stay On Your Feet!

Did you know?

- ✓ 40% of all nursing home admissions occur as a result of a fall
- ✓ Most falls happen in and around the home
- ✓ Fear of falling and inactivity can lead to the loss of independence
- ✓ Falls are predictable and can be prevented

Use this checklist to make your home a safer place to live.



our **SAFE HOME SUMMARY**

| | WORK TO BE DONE |
|--------------|-----------------|
| Outside | |
| | |
| Entrance | |
| | |
| Stairs | |
| | |
| Floors | |
| | |
| Living Space | |
| | |
| Kitchen | |
| | |
| Bathroom | |
| | |
| Bedroom | |
| | |
| Basement | |
| | |

USING YOUR FALLS PREVENTION CHECKLIST

Your home, furnishings and lifestyle all affect your risk of falling in and around the home.

Using this checklist, take your time and go through each room. Don't forget the basement, garage, porch and walkways too.

Think about having a family member or friend help you. Together you can spot the risks, make simple improvements and list changes needed to keep you and your family safe from falls.

A check in a "no" box suggests that you could be at greater risk for a fall—use the chart on page 12 to make your home safer. It's time to take control of your independence!

Outside YOUR HOME

YES NO

- Are the walkways and stairs leading to your home in good repair, free from cracks, holes and clutter?
- Are the walkways, stairs, ramps and paths well lit?
- Are the walkways, stairs and ramps finished with a non-slip surface or safety treads?
- Are there handrails on both sides of entrance stairs, walkway steps and ramps?

Garage

- Is the garage door easy to open and close?
- When your car is in the garage, can you get in and out of it easily?
- Is the garage free from clutter, debris and other hazards?
- Is there enough lighting?

Remember:

- Keep all walkways, ramps and stairs free of wet leaves, snow and clutter.
- Keep a mixture of sand and salt handy for icy walk areas.
- Always wear shoes that have good treads.
- If you use a cane, fit it with an “ice pick” so it won’t slip on icy surfaces.

Your MEDICINE CABINET

YES NO

- Do you know why you take each of your medications?
- Do you know what side effects your medication may cause? Some can increase the chance of falling!
- Do you know when and how to take each of your medications?
- Are your medications in clearly labelled containers in a cool dry place, away from the heat and humidity of the bath or shower?
- Do you keep an updated medication record, including any herbal supplements and over the counter medications, and carry it with you at all times?

Remember:

- Take old medications to your pharmacy or a hazardous waste disposal centre—do not put them in the garbage or down the drain or toilet.
- Only use medication that has been prescribed for you – sharing medication can be dangerous and sometimes fatal.
- Talk to your doctor or pharmacist before taking herbal supplements or over the counter medications. They are there to answer your questions.

Your BASEMENT

YES NO

- Is there plenty of light in the basement?
- Is your basement floor free from clutter?
- Are the edges of each stair clearly marked with a colour that stands out?
- Can you move through the room without bumping into things?
- Are the stairs well lit, in good repair and do they have a non-slip surface?
- Is there a handrail or banister on both sides of the stairway and do they go beyond the top and bottom step?
- Are there light switches at both the top and bottom of each flight of stairs?

Remember:

Consider putting a phone in the basement or carry a portable in your pocket.
Have a flashlight handy in case of power failure.
Be sure you know how to shut off the hydro, gas and water service.

Your ENTRANCE

YES NO

- Do you have good lighting outside all entrances?
- Are the eavestroughs over the entrances in good repair and clear of debris?
- Do the doors have handles that make them easy to open and close?
- Is there a bench or shelf to put packages on while you open the door?
- Is the doorway wide enough (about 32" or 800 mm) for easy use with a walker, cane or shopping buggy?
- Does the front mat stay firmly in position and is it in good condition?
- Are porch and balcony floors in good shape and railings secure?
- Are all exits and hallways clear of boxes, shoes and other clutter?

Remember:

Keep roof and eavestroughs over doorways free from snow and ice.
Consider putting up motion detector lights to light up the path to your door.

Our STAIRS

YES NO

- Are all stairs in good repair?
- Are stair steps even and no greater than 8" (200 mm)?
- Are the widths of the stair treads even and at least 10" (250 mm)?
- Do steps have a secured non-slip surface and clearly marked edges?
- Are there handrails on both sides of the stairway and do they go beyond the top and bottom step?
- Are the handrails mounted firmly and far enough away from the wall to allow for a solid grip?
- Are there light switches at both the top and bottom of each flight of stairs?
- Are all stairways well lit and free from shoes, packages and other clutter?
- Have scatter rugs been removed from top and bottom of stairs?

Remember:

- Avoid carrying large or heavy items when using the stairs.
- Keep one hand free to use the handrail.
- Always wear shoes when using stairs, step stools or ladders.
- Provide a night light in the stair area.
- Extend handrails beyond the top and bottom steps to provide stability.

Our BEDROOM

YES NO

- Is there a switch to turn lights on before entering your bedroom?
- Is there a lamp or light switch within easy reach of your bed?
- Is there a telephone within easy reach of your bed?
- Is there a clear path from the bed to the bathroom?
- Is there lots of space to move around the room freely?
- Is there a working flashlight within easy reach of the bed?
- Are all area rugs, mats and runners firmly secured to the floor and do they have slip-resistant backing?

Remember:

- Keep your emergency numbers beside the telephone.
- Sit rather than stand to complete dressing activities.
- Get light-sensitive night lights that brighten when it gets dark in a room or hallway.
- Consider a long-handled shoe horn or sock aid for putting on socks and shoes.
- Keep items you use often in easy reach in closets and storage areas.

Your BATHROOM

YES NO

- Does your bathtub and shower have a non-slip mat or slip-resistant surface?
- Is there good lighting in the bathroom, including a night light?
- Have grab bars with a textured hand surface been added to your bathtub and shower?
- Is it easy to reach and turn the taps on your basin or bathtub?
- Does your bathroom floor mat have a slip resistant backing?

Remember:

By placing towel racks close to the sink and tub you are less likely to drip water on the floor.
A bath seat and an adjustable shower head can provide stability for bathing.
A raised toilet seat and grab bars make it easier to reach the toilet.
Use a long-handled tub scrubber/mop when cleaning the tub or shower walls to avoid bending and reaching.
Test the temperature of the water before getting into the shower or bath.

Your FLOORS

YES NO

- Do all doorways have a low doorsill or threshold (less than one-half inch)?
- Are area rugs and runners fastened to the floor?
- Is flooring in good repair and floor vents secure?
- Are floor surfaces non-slip, especially wet areas such as bathroom, kitchen, laundry and entrances?
- Do you use non-skid wax and floor cleaners?

Remember:

Highly waxed floors can be very slippery and cause you to fall.
Keep bathroom, kitchen, laundry and entrances dry to avoid slips.
Scatter rugs are dangerous. Attach area rugs and runners with doublesided carpet tape.
Carpets with a low, tight pile are safest.

Our LIVING SPACE

YES NO

- Is there a light switch for turning on a light before entering a room?
- Is the furniture in your living areas arranged so you can move easily without bumping into objects?
- Are your travel paths clear of telephone and electrical cords?
- Are the windows easy to reach and to open, close and lock?

Remember:

Consider installing motion sensor switches for lights.
Add electrical outlets and phone jacks to avoid extension cords.
A good stable chair with arm rests makes it easier to get up and sit down.
To make it easier to get in and out of chairs, consider putting wooden blocks under furniture or use extra foam cushions to raise the seat height.

Our KITCHEN

YES NO

- Can you reach items you use most often without having to climb or strain to reach them?
- Do you have a step stool (with a safety rail) for reaching high places?
- Are heavy items in the lower cupboards and light items in the higher cupboards?
- Are the electrical outlets easy to reach without using extension cords?
- Can you turn the sink taps easily with one hand?

Remember:

Consider sitting down to complete kitchen tasks.
Avoid heavy lifting by resting large pots on the counter and filling with a cup.
Use a slotted spoon, metal colander or wire basket to remove vegetables from hot water rather than lifting the pot to drain.
Keep your emergency numbers beside the telephone.