

EDUCATIONAL: HOME SAFETY CHECKLIST

Our homes are utilized for many different purposes. The usual need is fulfilled for shelter. Once that need is met, then others arise. It is important for us to feel safe and protected in order to relax. Put strong dead bolt locks on front and back doors. Installing a burglar alarm system will help in some instances. A peephole for all outside doors is a must. It is important that you can see who is at the door before you open it. Be sure it is installed at the proper height for you. The most effective peepholes allow you to see a range of 180 degrees from side to side. Home should always be a place where we can be safe from the elements, outsiders and most of all, the home itself.

Home accidents are a major source of injuries and can cause death.. A simple fall that results in a broken bone can become a serious, disabling injury that limits one's independence. As we age, our senses of sight, touch, hearing, and smell tend to decline. Our physical abilities are reduced, and certain tasks such as stretching, lifting, and bending become more difficult. In addition, we also experience a slowing of judgment and reaction time. As a result, we cannot respond as quickly. These normal changes make us more prone to accidents. Simple precautions and adjustments can help ensure a safe, accident-free home.

A checklist has been included. Please make copies and use this list as you go through your home. Make a check mark next to those items or behaviors that you already have. (Some of the items may be repeated. That is to ensure that item is completed in that particular room. If there are items that you do not check, then your home is not as safe as it could be. By improving those items not marked, you can make your home a safer and more comfortable place to live.

All Areas of the Home

- _____ Emergency numbers and your address are posted by each telephone.
- _____ Telephones are located in each room. They can be reached from the floor in case of a fall.
- _____ Inside and outside door handles and locks are easy to operate.
- _____ Doors have lever-action handles instead of round knobs.
- _____ Door thresholds are low and beveled or there are no thresholds.
- _____ Windows open easily from the inside, but they have a secure locking system that can prevent someone from entering from the outside.
- _____ Hot water heater is set to "Low" or 120 degrees or lower to prevent accidental scalding.
- _____ Carpeting and rugs are not worn or torn.
- _____ Small, loose rugs have non-skid backing and are not placed in traffic areas of the home.
- _____ Appliances, lamps, and cords are clean and in good condition.
- _____ There are no exposed, glaring bulbs in lamps or fixtures.

- _____ All electrical equipment bears the Underwriters laboratories (UL) label.
- _____ Outlets are located where they are needed in every room.
- _____ Electrical overload protection is provided by circuit breakers, fuses, or ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI). GFCIs prevent electrical shock and are particularly important in areas where water is used, such as kitchens, bathrooms, and outside.
- _____ Electrical service has enough capacity to serve the house and is up to code. (You can call your municipal electrical inspector or a reputable electrical contractor to check the wiring in your house.)
- _____ Extension cords do not carry more than their proper load as indicated on the cord or appliance.
- _____ Electrical cords are placed out of the flow of traffic and out from underneath rugs and furniture.
- _____ Smoke alarms are present in the home and are in working order. One way to help you remember to change the batteries is to replace them on your birthday—don't forget to mark it on your calendar.

In the Kitchen

- _____ The range and sink areas have adequate light levels.
- _____ If you have a gas range, it is equipped with pilot lights and an automatic cut-off in the event of flame failure. (Your local utility service representative can check this for you.)
- _____ The range is not where curtains might fall onto a burner.
- _____ If you have an exhaust hood for the oven, it has easily removable filters for proper cleaning. Clean filters as needed.
- _____ The kitchen exhaust system is internally vented, discharges directly outside, or discharges through ducts to the outside and not into the attic or other unused space.
- _____ The ventilation system or range exhaust is in use while you are cooking.
- _____ Countertop space lets you keep carrying and lifting to a minimum.
- _____ Kitchen wall cabinets are not too high to be easily reached.
- _____ Lighting of counter tops is enough for meal preparation. (Especially where food is sliced or cut.)
- _____ Light switches are located near the doors
- _____ Shiny or glaring work surfaces are not used.
- _____ Oven controls are clearly marked and easily grasped.
- _____ Oven controls are located on the front or side of the oven, so that you don't have to reach over the burners.
- _____ A single-lever mixing faucet is used. This type of faucet controls both the hot and cold water flow with a single control.
- _____ Flooring is not slippery and has a non-glare surface.
- _____ When cooking, pan handles are turned away from other burners and the edge of the range.
- _____ When cooking, you do not wear garments with long, loose sleeves.
- _____ Hot pads and pan holders are kept near the range.
- _____ If you have a microwave, it is operated only when there is food in it.
- _____ Small appliances are unplugged when not in use.
- _____ All extension cords and appliance cords are located away from the sink or range.

- _____ Knives are kept in a knife rack or drawer.
- _____ Countertops and work areas are cleared of all unnecessary objects.
- _____ Drawers and cupboards are kept closed.
- _____ A sturdy, stable stepladder or step stool is used rather than a chair to reach objects in overhead cabinets. Tighten screws and braces
- _____ Grease or liquid spills are wiped up at once.

In the Living Room/Family Room

Check all rugs and runners, electrical and telephone cords, lighting, the fireplace and chimney, the telephone area, and all passageways.

- _____ Chimneys are clear from accumulations of leaves and other debris.
- _____ Has the chimney been cleaned within the last year.
- _____ Passageways in heavy traffic areas are well lit.
- _____ Passageways are free from clutter, obstructions or tripping hazards.
- _____ Electrical cords are placed along walls (not under rugs) and away from traffic areas.
- _____ Chairs and sofas are sturdy and secure.
- _____ Chairs and sofas are not too low or too deep to get in and out of easily.
- _____ Chairs and sofas have full arms to aid in sitting or rising.
- _____ The light switch is located near the entrance.
- _____ Furniture, which might be used for support when walking or rising, is steady and does not tilt.

Bathroom

In the bathroom, check bathtub and shower areas, water temperature, rugs and mats, lighting, small electrical appliances, and storage areas for medications.

- _____ The bathtub or shower has a non-skid mat or strips on the standing area.
- _____ Bathtub or shower doors are safety glass or plastic.
- _____ Grab bars are installed on the walls by the bathtub and toilet by someone who is qualified.
- _____ The towel bars and the soap dish in the shower stall are durable and are firmly installed.
- _____ A single-lever mixing faucet is used, or you have faucet handles that are easy to grasp.
- _____ Bathroom flooring is matte-finished, textured tile, or low pile commercial carpet (no throw rugs or bathmats).
- _____ Bathroom has even lighting without glare. The light switch is near the door.
- _____ The bathroom door opens outward.
- _____ The bathroom has a safe supplemental heat source and ventilation system.
- _____ The outlets are ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI) that protect against electric shock.
- _____ Light switch is near the entrance of the bathroom.
- _____ Small electrical appliances such as hair dryers, shavers, curling irons, etc., are unplugged when not in use.

Check Medications

_____ All medicines are stored in the containers that they came in and are clearly marked.

Bedrooms

In the bedroom, check all rugs and runners, electrical and telephone cords, and areas around beds.

- _____ There is a telephone close to your bed.
- _____ The bathroom has a safe supplemental heat source and ventilation system.
- _____ The outlets are ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI) that protect against electric shock
- _____ Lamps or light switches are within reach of each bed.
- _____ Ashtrays, smoking materials, or other sources of heat or flame are located away from bedding.
- _____ There is nothing covering your electric blanket (i.e. other blankets, pets, etc) while in use.
- _____ The sides of the electric blanket are not tucked in.
- _____ You do not fall asleep with the heating pad on.
- _____ A lamp or flashlight is kept within reach of your bed. Check batteries periodically to make sure they are working, and keep a spare package of batteries nearby.
- _____ Plenty of room is left for you to walk around the bed.
- _____ You have an adequate-sized nightstand or small table for the telephone, glasses, or other important items.
- _____ There is a sturdy chair with arms where you can sit to dress.
- _____ You have wall-to-wall low pile carpeting or a smooth surface floor.
- _____ Your bedroom is located on the first floor of the home.

Basement/Garage/Workshop/Storage Areas

In the basement, garage, workshop, and storage areas, check lighting; fuse boxes or circuit breakers, appliances and power tools, electrical cords, and flammable liquids.

- _____ Work areas, especially where power tools are used, are well lit.
- _____ Light switch located near the doorway.
- _____ Pathways are kept clear of tripping hazards.
- _____ Fuse box is checked to be sure the fuses being used are the correct size.
- _____ Power tools are equipped with a 3-prong plug or are marked to show that they are double insulated.
- _____ Guards are in place for the power tools.
- _____ The grounding pin is intact on the 3 prong plug and the adapter is being used properly.
- _____ Containers of volatile liquids are tightly capped.
- _____ Gasoline, paints, solvents, & other products that give off vapors or fumes are stored away from ignition sources.
- _____ Fuse box is checked to be sure the fuses being used are the correct size.
- _____ Power tools are equipped with a 3-prong plug or are marked to show that they are double insulated.
- _____ Guards are in place for the power tools.
- _____ The grounding pin is intact on the 3 prong plug and the adapter is being used pr

In Stairways and Hallways

For all stairways and hallways, check lighting, handrails, and the condition of the steps and coverings.

- _____ Stairs are lit so that each step and the edges can be clearly seen going up and down.
- _____ The bulbs used are the right type and wattage for the light fixture.
- _____ An operating flash light is in a convenient location at the top and bottom of the stairs.
- _____ Steps are the same size and height..
- _____ The coverings on the steps are in good condition.
- _____ The edges of the steps can be seen clearly.
- _____ All objects are removed from stairways and hallways.
- _____ Steps are in good condition.
- _____ Steps have non-skid strips. Carpeting on steps is securely fastened and free of fraying or holes.
- _____ Smoke detectors are in place in hallways and near sleeping areas.
- _____ Hallways are equipped with night-lights.
- _____ Sturdy handrails are on both sides of stairway and are securely fastened.
- _____ Light switches are located at the top and bottom of stairways and at both ends of long hallways.
- _____ Inside doors do not swing out over stair steps.
- _____ There is enough space in the stairway to avoid bumping your head.
- _____ Room entrances do not have raised door thresholds.
- _____ It is easy to see the leading edge or nosing of each stair tread while walking down stairs

Outdoor Area

- _____ Steps and walkways are in good condition.
- _____ Handrails are sturdy and securely fastened.
- _____ Doorways, steps, porches, and walkways have good lighting.
- _____ Porches, balconies, terraces, window wells, and other heights or depressions are protected by railings, closed with banisters, closed with fences, closed with accordion gates, or are otherwise protected.
- _____ Hedges, trees, or shrubs do not hide the view of the street.
- _____ Garage doors are easy for you to operate, even when snow is piled against them.
- _____ The garage is adequately ventilated.

***** REMEMBER TO PERIODICALLY RE-CHECK YOUR HOME!**

If you find that your home does need changes in order to make it safe, you may want to hire a home repair contractor or handyman. It is important to select a reputable contractor. Here are a few guidelines to help protect you:

1. Ask friends to recommend repair contractors.
2. Get at least three written estimates for the project. Most contractors give free estimates.
3. Ask for and check references.
4. If licensing is required in your area, ask to see the contractor's license. Also ask for proof of insurance and bonding.
5. Do not pay the contractor in full before the work is done. Some contractors will ask for a small down payment, which is permissible.
6. Get a signed written agreement before work begins or money is exchanged. The agreement should specify both work and payment schedules. It should also detail the type of work to be completed.
7. Do not make final payments on the project until the work has been performed to your satisfaction.
8. Check with the Better Business Bureau or the attorney general's office if you have questions or complaints about a contractor.

Please use this checklist for yourself or your loved ones. I know it is lengthy but the little time we take now could save us an abundance of heartache and pain later. For more information you can contact your local Agency for the Aging. Please, BE SAFE!

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