



9 Easy Ways to Prevent Falls at Home

While slipping on ice outdoors is a definite health hazard, fall prevention for the elderly starts right inside your own home. Correcting these common hazards will go a long way toward preventing falls.

By Wyatt Myers

Medically reviewed by Pat F. Bass III, MD, MPH

Whether it's slippery floors, rickety stairs, or electrical cords on the floor, some of the most common causes of falls are actually in your own home, where you might have a false sense of security. That's why fall prevention starts with creating a living space that's safe.

Luckily, this doesn't have to involve major home changes or a complete house remodel. You can make your home a safer place designed for fall prevention in the elderly with just a few basic changes.

Senior care experts offer the following advice for preventing falls at home:

1. **Clean up clutter.** The easiest method for preventing falls is to keep your home clean and tidy. Remove all clutter, such as stacks of old newspapers and magazines, especially from hallways and staircases.
2. **Repair or remove tripping hazards.** Sometimes, home fixtures can contribute to falls, which in turn lead to back pain and other injuries. Examine every room and hallway, looking for items such as loose carpet, slippery throw rugs, or wood floorboards that stick up. Then repair, remove, or replace those items for more effective fall prevention.
3. **Install grab bars and hand rails.** These safety devices are the keys to going up and down stairs, getting on and off the toilet, and in and out of the bathtub without injuring yourself. Gary Kaplan, DO, founder and medical director of the Kaplan Center for Integrative Medicine in McLean, Va., suggests installing grab bars by toilets and bathtubs and handrails in stairways and hallways for fall prevention in the elderly. Have a handyman or family member help with this, if needed.
4. **Avoid wearing loose clothing.** You want to feel comfortable at home, but baggy clothes can sometimes contribute to your risk of falling. For fall prevention in the elderly, opt for tighter-fitting and properly hemmed clothing that doesn't bunch up or drag on the ground.
5. **Light it right.** Inadequate lighting is another major hazard that can stand between you and preventing falls at home. To create a home that's more suitable for fall prevention in the elderly, install brighter light bulbs where needed, particularly in stairways and narrow hallways. Robert Bunning, MD, , associate medical director of the National Rehabilitation

Hospital in Washington, D.C., also recommends adding night lights in bedrooms and bathrooms.

6. **Wear shoes.** Socks may be comfortable, but they present a slipping risk. Preventing falls at home can be as simple as wearing shoes.
7. **Make it non-slip.** Bathtubs and showers, as well as floors in kitchens, bathrooms, and porches can become extremely dangerous when wet. For preventing falls on slick surfaces, Dr. Kaplan recommends purchasing and placing non-slip mats where appropriate.
8. **Live on one level.** Even with precautions such as guard rails, stairs can present a significant falling hazard. “If possible, live on one level,” says Kaplan. “Otherwise, be extra careful when you negotiate stairs.”
9. **Move more carefully.** Dr. Bunning explains that many people fall at home by moving too quickly from a sitting to a standing position and vice versa. Preventing falls of this nature is as easy as simply taking your time. “All you have to do is pause after going from lying down to sitting and from sitting to standing,” he says. “Also take a pause before using the railing on stairs, whether going up or down.”

Fall prevention in the elderly can amount to injury prevention. Ask your loved ones to help you ensure that your rooms and stairways are clutter-free and well-equipped with lighting, hand rails, grab bars, and non-slip mats, to help you avoid falling — which can go a long way toward keeping you safe in your own home.

Learn more in the Everyday Health Longevity Center.



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