

HOME SAFETY CHECKLIST FOR OLDER ADULTS

Household accidents and crime constitute two of the greatest threats to the lives, safety and independence of older persons. A fall, a fire or a burglary can easily result in permanent injury, a move to a nursing home, or even in death.

Please use this checklist to inspect your home for hazards and potential problems. After you complete your inspection, write down all problem areas you've checked - and the corrective action to be taken.

If you would like to have an occupational therapist perform a home safety evaluation and make specific recommendations about assistive devices mentioned in this checklist, please speak with your physician.

For information on home repairs and safety modifications, call your state or regional Office on Aging, or the League of Human Dignity Office nearest you:

**Omaha, NE: 402-595-1410
Lincoln, NE: 402-441-7650
Norfolk, NE: 402-371-4475
Kearney, NE: 308-224-3633**

**Council Bluffs, IA: 712-323-6811
North Platte, NE: 308-532-4922
Scottsbluff, NE: 308-632-0472**

You may download and print a copy of this and other patient education documents from our Internet web site: <http://unmc.edu/homeinsteadcenter> Click on MENU TAB at the top of the page, and then click the HEALTH EDUCATION link. Document links appear on the left side-bar.

**The Home Instead Center for Successful Aging
University of Nebraska Medical Center
Omaha, Nebraska
(402) 559-9600**

INSPECT ALL LIGHT FIXTURES:

Yes No

___ ___ **Is lighting adequate and equally distributed throughout the home? Several light sources with lower- wattage light bulbs are better than one high-wattage bulb that may cause glare.**

___ ___ **Are light bulbs the appropriate wattage for lamps? (Each lamp should have a sticker stating the maximum safe wattage).**

___ ___ **Are light switches located so that any dark space can be illuminated before entry? Light switches should be located at both the top and bottom of a stairway.**

___ ___ **Are night-lights used in the bathroom, bedroom and in the connecting hallway?**

___ ___ **Are working flashlights kept by the bed and on all levels of the home in case of a power failure?**

INSPECT ALL ELECTRICAL CORDS AND OUTLETS:

Yes No

___ ___ **Are any outlets overloaded?**

___ ___ **Are outlets easy to reach? Outlets can be moved higher on the wall, or furniture can be re-arranged to avoid blocking them.**

___ ___ **Do any cords have frayed ends or cracked surfaces?**

___ ___ **Are long cords gathered, tied back and kept away from traffic areas?**

INSPECT ALL PIECES OF FURNITURE:

Yes No

- Is furniture arranged for a good traffic pattern?**
- Are all pieces of furniture sturdy and not easily tipped?**
- Are chairs easy to get in and out of? Avoid deep, soft chairs and those without arms. Consider a “lift “chair for a person with mobility problems.**
- Are chair arms sturdy and easy to grasp for support?**

INSPECT APPLIANCES:

Yes No

- Do irons and other appliances have automatic shut-off features to prevent overheating if mistakenly left on?**
- Can heating pads and electric blankets be connected to light-timers to prevent overheating and to avoid burns from prolonged exposure?**
- Are the washer and dryer located on the main floor to avoid trips up and down basement stairs? Small, stackable units often fit well in a kitchen or utility room.**
- Are telephones located on each level of the home and in the bedroom to avoid falls while rushing to answer the phone? (Consider a carry-along cell phone).**
- Do portable space heaters have screens to prevent contact with external objects? Space heaters should always be kept away from flammable objects.**
- Do all fireplaces have spark-screens?**
- Are smoke/carbon monoxide detectors located on each level of the home, including the basement and near the bedroom?**

- Are smoke/carbon monoxide detector batteries checked at six-month intervals and changed annually? A simple rule of thumb is to routinely test detectors and replace batteries in the Spring and Fall when clocks are adjusted forward/backward.
- Have the heating and cooling systems been inspected and serviced within the past year? Ask the technician to also test carbon monoxide detectors to insure they are still functioning.
- Is the water heater thermostat set no higher than 125 degrees to prevent scalding?

INSPECT ALL FLOOR SURFACES:

Yes No

- Are rooms filled with too much furniture to allow safe walking? Can furniture be removed or re-arranged?
- Are items (boxes, books, etc.) piled inappropriately on floors, presenting a risk for falls?
- Are any floor tiles loose, broken, or missing?
- Are all carpet and linoleum edges firmly secured to the floor?
- Are all area and throw rugs secured to the floor with rubber backing or double-faced adhesive tape? (Throw rugs of any kind are strongly discouraged!)
- Is carpeting too thick or plush to walk on safely?

FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED PERSONS:

- Do carpets have contrasting colors from one room to another, particularly where one must step up or down?
- Have all raised sills in doorways been eliminated or marked with color-contrast tape for better visibility?

INSPECT ALL STAIRWAYS:

Yes No

- Are stairways well lighted? Light switches should be located at both the top and bottom of each staircase.**
- Are any steps cracked, loose or sagging?**
- Are banister rails easy to grasp, sturdy, and well anchored?**
- Do banisters extend slightly beyond the top and bottom steps?**
- Are stairways cluttered with boxes or other objects?**
- Are stairways carpeted, or do they have non-skid vinyl/rubber treads in contrasting colors to increase visibility? Strips of florescent tape placed on the top and bottom steps are helpful.**

INSPECT THE BATHROOM(S):

Yes No

- Would a raised toilet seat make it easier for the person to get on and off the commode?**
- Are grab rails installed by the toilet and tub to provide assistance and prevent falls?**
- Are non-skid strips or a mat used both inside and just outside the tub? Only use mats with a non-skid or rubber backing.**
- Can a shower chair and a hand-held shower wand be used to make showering easier?**
- Should a urinal or commode be considered for use in the bedroom when otherwise you would need help getting to and from the bathroom?**

INSPECT THE KITCHEN:

Yes No

- Do deep or floor-level cabinets have slide-out shelves or storage baskets? Store frequently used items in easy-to-reach places. Use only a sturdy, wide-based step-stool to reach high shelves.**
- Do you avoid wearing garments with loose-fitting sleeves while working around stove burners? If not, be sure to roll up or fasten sleeves with a rubber band.**
- Do you use a cart with wheels to move heavy or bulky objects in and around the kitchen?**
- Do you use an apron with pockets to hold/carry small objects?**
- Is the kitchen arranged so that food preparation and cleanup can be done from a chair if prolonged standing is a problem?**
- Are all toxic and flammable substances stored away from food products and the stove?**

INSPECT ALL DOORS:

Yes No

- Can any unnecessary interior doors be removed?**
- Are door knobs easy to grasp for arthritic hands? (Consider replacing round knobs with lever handles).**
- Can raised door sills be eliminated?**
- Can the bathroom door be installed to open outward to permit easy rescue in case of a fall?**
- Does the garage door have an automatic opener?**

INSPECT THE HOME'S EXTERIOR:

Yes No

- Are concrete and brick areas free from large cracks and uneven surfaces? Textured concrete surfaces lessen the risk of falls.
- Are all wooden surfaces free from cracks, sagging or unstable surfaces; and exposed nail heads?
- Are all banister rails easy to grasp, sturdy, and well anchored?
- Do banister rails extend slightly beyond the top and bottom steps?
- Are gutter downspouts extended away from walks and driveway to avoid icy patches?

INSPECT FOR THE FOLLOWING SECURITY MEASURES:

Yes No

- Do all exterior doors have dead-bolt locks? Double Cylinder dead-bolts (opened with a key from both sides) should be installed on exterior doors with windows. Dead-bolt locks should also be placed on doors leading from the garage or basement into the house.
- Do all screen doors lock from the inside?
- Are basement/garage windows secured with "burglar-bars"?
- Do all first-floor windows have devices to prevent them from being raised high enough to permit entry from the outside?
- Are boards placed along the inside bottom tracts of sliding glass doors and windows to prevent them from being opened from the outside?
- Are "dusk-to-dawn" or "motion detector" lights installed on the exterior?