

## **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**

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**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?