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 have 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 in Omaha (402) 595-1256, or in Lincoln (402) 441-7871.

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(created 3/2003)

A printable version of the checklist is available by clicking [here](http://dev2.unmc.edu/imredesign/geriatrics/home_safety_checklist_for_older.htm).

Inspect all lamps and 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 higher-wattage light that may cause glare.

___  ___

Are light bulbs the appropriate wattage for lamps? (Sometimes 100 watt bulbs are installed in lamps that are safe only for 60 watt bulbs.)

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___  ___

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 hallway
connecting the two?

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? If not, perhaps they could be moved higher on the wall, or furniture could be re-arranged to avoid blocking them.
___  ___

Do any cords have frayed ends or cracked surfaces?

Inspect all pieces of furniture:
Yes  No  ___  ___

Are all pieces of furniture sturdy and not easily tipped?
___  ___

Are chairs easy to get in/out of? Avoid deep, soft chairs and those without arms. Consider a "lift chair" for a person with mobility problems.
___  ___

Are chair arm rests 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 in the kitchen or a utility room on the main floor to avoid trips up and down basement stairs? (Small, apartment-sized "piggy-back" units often fit well on a main level.)
___  ___

Are telephones located on each level of the home (including the basement and bedroom) to avoid falls while rushing up or down steps to answer the phone?
___  ___

Do portable space heaters have screens to shield the heating coils from contact with external objects?
___  ___

Are space heaters kept away from flammable objects,
Home Safety Checklist For Older Adults

____  ____

such as paper, clothing and upholstery?

____  ____

Are smoke detectors/carbon monoxide detectors located on each level of the home, including the basement and near the bedroom? Wall-mounted detectors are easier to see and reach.

____  ____

Are smoke and carbon monoxide detector batteries checked at six-month intervals and changed annually? A simple rule of thumb is to routinely check detectors and replace batteries in April and October when clocks are adjusted forward/backward.

Have the heating and cooling systems been inspected and serviced within the past year?

Inspect all floor surfaces:

Yes  No  ____  ____

____  ____

Are rooms cluttered with too much furniture to allow safe movement?

____  ____

Are items (boxes, books, etc.) piled in appropriately on floors, constituting a hazard to safe movement?

____  ____

Are any floor tiles loose, broken, or missing?

____  ____

Are all linoleum surfaces secured to the floor?

____  ____

Are all area and throw rugs secured to the floor with rubber backing or double-faced adhesive tape? (We strongly discourage throw rugs!)

Is carpeting too thick or plush to walk on safely?

For visually impaired persons:

Yes  No  ____  ____

____  ____

Do carpets have contrasting colors from one room to another (particularly where one must step up or down)?

____  ____

Have all raised ridges in doorways been eliminated or marked with color contrast tape for better visibility?

Inspect all stairways:
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 books or other objects?

Are stairways carpeted, or do they have non-slip vinyl/rubber treads in contrasting colors to increase visibility: A strip of fluorescent tape placed on the top and bottom steps is helpful.

Inspect the bathroom (s):

Would a raised toilet seat make it easier for the person to get down on and up from the commode?

Are grab rails installed by the toilet and tub to provide assistance and prevent falls?

Are non-slip strips or a mat used both inside and just outside the tub? Only use mats with a non-slip 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?

Is the water heater thermostat set below 110 degrees?

Inspect the Kitchen:
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**Deep or Floor-level Cabinets**

Do deep or floor-level cabinets have slide-out shelves or storage baskets? Try to store frequently used items in easy-to-reach places. Use only a sturdy, wide-based step-stool to reach high shelves.

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**Avoiding Loose Fitting Sleeves**

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.

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**Moving Heavy Objects**

Do you use a cart with wheels to move heavy or bulky objects in and around the kitchen?

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**Carrying Small Objects**

Do you use an apron with pockets to hold/carry small objects?

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**Kitchen Arrangement**

Is the kitchen arranged so that food preparation and cleanup can be done from a chair if prolonged standing is a problem?

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**Poisonous and Flammable Substances**

Are all poisonous and flammable substances stored away from food products and the stove? (We recommend poisons and flammables not be stored in the kitchen at all!)

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**Inspect All Doors**

Can any unnecessary interior doors be removed?

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**Door Knobs**

Are door knobs easy to grasp for arthritic hands? (Consider replacing round knobs with lever handles.)

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**Raised Door Sills**

Can raised door sills be eliminated?

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**Bathroom Door**

Can bathroom door be installed to open outward? (In the event of a fall in the bathroom this will permit an easier rescue.)

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**Garage Door**

Does the garage door have an automatic opener?

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Inspect the home’s exterior (steps, porches, walks and driveway):
Yes No ___ ___ Are concrete and brick areas free from large cracks and uneven surfaces?

___ ___ 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 down spouts extended away from walks and driveway to avoid ice patches?