

Keystone **ACO**

Home Safety

Keeping you and your home safe





Your home is where you can relax and feel safe

Your home is where you spend quality time with your family. It's the one place in the world where you should feel safe and secure. Yet each year thousands of people are injured as a result of falling either inside or outside their homes.

Falls can be dangerous to anyone. According to the Center for Disease Control, emergency rooms receive 28.4 million visits per year due to unintentional injuries, many of these occurring at home.

Fortunately, many common household injuries, including broken bones, can easily be prevented by making simple changes around the house to reduce the risk of accidents.

We want to make sure you stay safe and secure. This booklet contains information that will help make your home a safer place to live.

Safety outside the house

- 1 Keep sidewalks and steps in good repair, especially in the winter when they may become covered with snow or ice. If you can't do it yourself, ask family, friends or neighbors to help.
- 2 Keep hedges and shrubbery trimmed and away from walkways.



- 3 Be sure windows and doors are easy to open and close.
- 4 Make certain doorways are well lit and in public view.
- 5 Ensure locks are sturdy and easy to operate.

Safety inside the house

1 Floors

- Remove all loose wires, cords and throw rugs.
- Make sure rugs are anchored and smooth.
- Changes in floor levels should be clearly marked. Vary colors at floor levels so you can see where steps begin and end.
- Minimize clutter.



2 Lighting and electrical

- Make sure halls, stairways and entrances are well lit.
- Do not overload outlets.
- Smoke detectors should be on all levels of your home. Replace smoke detector batteries once a year.
- Replace any frayed wires.
- Create an emergency evacuation plan with your family.

3 Bathrooms

- Install grab bars or handrails on the shower, on walls, around the bathtub and alongside the toilet.
- Use a non-skid tub or shower mat.
- Install a non-skid shower seat and hand-held shower head in order to sit while bathing.
- Consider installing a raised toilet seat if your toilet is too low.
- Make sure water temperature is set at 120 degrees or less to prevent scalding injuries.
- Make sure all appliances are unplugged when not in use.
- Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) outlets are to be used in wet locations such as bathrooms, kitchens, laundry rooms and outdoors.



4 Stairs

- Install handrails to use when walking up and down the stairs.
- Remove clutter from the stairs to avoid tripping.
- Consider installing a ramp if you are unable to use steps.

5 Kitchen

- Store commonly used items within easy reach to avoid bending or climbing.
- Keep a small fire extinguisher handy and know how to operate it in the event of an emergency.
- Use a long-handled-grasping device to reach objects that are on the floor or a high shelf
- Clean spills immediately.
- Avoid climbing on a chair, instead use a step stool with a handrail.



6 Bedrooms (see page 3 for graphic)

- Use a firm, supportive mattress.
- Have a telephone within easy reach of the bed.
- Use a night light in the hallway between the bedroom and the bathroom.
- When getting up from the bed, sit on the side of the bed for a moment.
- Stand up slowly to prevent dizziness.
- Consider a first floor bedroom if you are unable to use steps.
- Keep a flashlight close to the bed in case of a power failure.



7 Living area (see page 3 for graphic)

- When purchasing new furniture, consider furniture with good back support that will make it easier to stand up from a sitting position.
- Secure wall-to-wall carpeting firmly. Area rugs should be backed with non-skid padding. Avoid putting small area rugs on top of larger carpets.

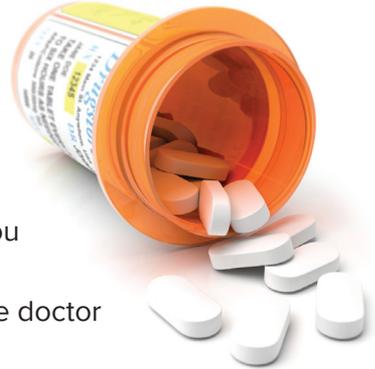
Aids to prevent or reduce falls

If you have poor balance or have fallen before, you may want to consider using certain protective wear and aids that are useful in preventing falls or reducing your risk of injury. These include, but are not limited to the following:

- Canes: Use a cane that gives you adequate support. Avoid using one that is too heavy, and make sure it is the proper length for you.
- Walkers: If you don't feel secure with a cane, use a walker instead. A rolling walker with wheels can also help to reduce back strain.
- Hip protectors: This is a garment worn to reduce hip fracture risk for those prone to falls.

Playing it safe with medications

- Be aware of certain medications that can increase your risk of falling by causing dizziness, a change in sensation or slowed reflexes. Such medications include blood pressure pills, heart medicines, water pills, tranquilizers and sleeping medicines.
- Have an understanding of why you are taking each medication. Discuss this with your healthcare provider.
- Know what side effects may occur and report any side effects to your healthcare provider. This includes any allergies you have to specific medications.
- Update your medication list when your medications change. Take that list with you to all healthcare provider appointments including visits to your PCP, specialist, eye doctor or dentist.
- Take medications as prescribed and at the same time each day.
- Store all medications in their original container.
- Take medications for as long as they are prescribed.
- Properly discard medications you are no longer taking. Do not take someone else's prescription for any reason.
- Do not leave medication bottles open and within reach of young children.
- Check labels for expiration dates on medication and dispose of outdated medications.



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