



Fall Prevention: Solutions for Your Home¹

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Thousands of older adults fall in their homes each year. As you age, your home can present some challenges. But you can make changes that let your home better meet your needs while reducing your fall risk. Below is a list of possible hazards in your home and modifications that can be made for your safety.

Limited Reach

High shelves in the kitchen, closets, and other storage areas can be harder to reach as you age. Lower shelves three inches from their standard height for easier access.

Trying to reach high closet rods can be dangerous. Use height-adjustable closet rods to keep your clothes within reach. If you must use a step stool, use one that has a bar to hold on to, or, use a "reacher" or "grabber" device instead to extend the reach of your arm. Never use a chair as a step stool. You can find examples of assistive devices online.

Install a peephole in the front door at the right height for you. This will allow you to see out without the hazard trying to balance on your tip toes.

Limited Vision

Unless you have perfect vision, wear your glasses when moving around the house.

Small numbers on telephones can be difficult to read. If you are disoriented from a fall, it can be especially hard to see the numbers. Purchase a telephone with a large number keypad and keep at least one phone at a low level for easy reach if you do fall. Also, keep a list of emergency numbers by the phone printed in large font.

Dim lighting in your house can be dangerous. Increase the wattage of your light bulbs to brighten your rooms and allow you to easily see obstacles in your path. It is also a good idea to install overhead lights and night lights near walkways, stairs, and entrances. Keep a lamp next to your bedside for easy access to light during the evening.

Hearing Impairments

In case of a fire, it is important that you are able to get out of your house safely and quickly. If you

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have a hearing impairment, buy smoke detectors with strobe lights.

Be sure you can hear the doorbell throughout your house. If you can hear the doorbell on the first ring, there will be no need to rush, which can increase your risk of falling.

Limited Flexibility or Lifting Ability

Some handles on cabinets and drawers are not easy to grip. Choosing u-shaped or d-shaped handles will allow you to grasp handles more easily.

Install single lever faucets in your kitchen and bathroom. They are easier to adjust than hot and cold water knobs.

Limited Mobility

Going up and down stairs is one of the leading causes of falls among older adults. Be sure to use the handrails on both sides of the stairs.

Use reflective tape to mark changes in flooring levels.

Throw rugs can slip easily, especially on tile and wood floors. Remove rugs or secure them with a non-stick rug runner between the floor and the rug; double sided tape can also be used.

Older adults often have a harder time showering as they age. Have a handheld showerhead installed and sit on a bath bench or chair while showering.

Install grab bars to help you get in and out of the bathtub safely. This will reduce your risk of slipping and falling.

Use a walker or wheelchair in your home as well as outside if you are unsteady on your feet.

Patios, driveways, and stairs can be difficult to walk on, especially when wet. Use textured surfaces for these areas to increase your stability.

Get More Information

The Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) agent in your county Extension office may have more written information. Look for "Cooperative Extension

Service" in the blue pages of your telephone book; in Florida, find your county Extension office at the University of Florida IFAS Extension website:

<http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/map>

Other reliable websites include:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<http://www.cdc.gov/homeandrecreationalafety/falls/index.html>
- National Council on Aging/Center for Healthy Aging
<http://www.healthyagingprograms.org/>
- Department of Health and Human Services/Administration on Aging
<http://www.aoa.gov/>
- Medline Plus
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/assistivedevices.html>