



Prevent Falls

Home Modification Strategies

Falls can occur anytime, anyplace and to anyone while doing everyday activities such as climbing stairs or getting out of the bathtub. Research shows that simple safety modifications at home-where 60 percent of seniors' falls occur-can substantially cut the risk of falling. Protect yourself with these simple changes in furniture arrangement, housekeeping and lighting to prevent falls.

Bedroom

- Place a lamp, telephone and flashlight near your bed.
- Sleep on a bed that is easy to get into and out of.
- Replace satiny sheets and comforter with products made of nonslippery material, i.e. wool, cotton.
- Arrange clothes in your closet so that they are easy-to-reach.
- Install a night-light along the route between your bedroom and the bathroom.
- Keep clutter off the bedroom floor.

Living areas

- Arrange furniture so you have a clear pathway between rooms.
- Keep low-rise coffee tables, magazine racks, footrests and plants out of the path of traffic.
- Install easy-access light switches at entrances to rooms so you won't have to walk into a darkened room in order to turn on the light. Glow-in-the-dark switches may be helpful.
- Walk only in well-lighted rooms, stairs and halls.
- Do not store boxes near doorways or in hallways.
- Remove newspapers and all clutter from pathways.
- Keep electric, appliance and telephone cords out of walkways, but don't put cords under a rug.
- Don't run extension cords across pathways; rearrange furniture.
- Secure loose area rugs with double-faced tape, tacks, or slip-resistant backing.
- Don't sit in a chair or on a sofa that is so low it is difficult to stand up.
- Repair loose wooden floorboards right away.
- Remove door sills higher than 1/2".

Kitchen

- Remove throw rugs.
- Clean up immediately any liquids, grease, or food spilled on the floor.
- Store food, dishes, and cooking equipment within easy reach.
- Don't stand on chairs or boxes to reach upper cabinets.
- Use nonskid floor wax.



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Stairs and steps

- Keep stairs clear of packages, boxes or clutter.
- Light switches should be at the top and bottom of the stairs. Or consider installing motion-detector lights which turn on automatically.
- Provide enough light to see each stair and the top and bottom landings.
- Keep flashlights nearby in case of a power outage.
- Remove loose area rugs from the bottom or top of stairs.
- Replace patterned, dark or deep-pile carpeting with a solid color, which will show the edges of steps more clearly.
- Put non-slip treads on each bare-wood step.
- Install handrails on both sides of the stairway. Each should be 30 inches above the stairs and extend the full length of the stairs.
- Repair loose stairway carpeting or wooden boards immediately.

Bathroom

- Place a slip-resistant rug adjacent to the bathtub for safe exit and entry.
- Mount a liquid soap dispenser on the bathtub/shower wall.
- Install grab bars on the bathroom walls.
- Keep a night-light in the bathroom.
- Use a rubber mat or place nonskid adhesive textured strips on the tub.
- Replace glass shower enclosures with non-shattering material.
- Stabilize yourself on the toilet by using either a raised seat or a special toilet seat with armrests.
- Use a sturdy, plastic seat in the bathtub if you cannot lower yourself to the floor of the tub or if you are unsteady.

For more information on fall reduction strategies, home medication, and local advocacy work go to www.stopfalls.org or call the Santa Barbara Fall Prevention Task Force c/o Adult and Aging Network at 805-614-1264.