

At least one-third of all falls in the elderly involve environmental hazards in the home. The most common hazard for falls is tripping over objects on the floor. Other factors include poor lighting, loose rugs, lack of grab bars or poorly located/mounted grab bars, and unsturdy furniture.

## **Prevention Tips**

It is useful to conduct a walk-through of your home to identify possible problems that may lead to falling. A home visit by an interior designer or occupational therapist might also be useful in that they are trained to identify risk factors and recommend appropriate actions.

## **Outdoors**

- Repair cracks and abrupt edges of sidewalks and driveways.
- Install handrails on stairs and steps.
- Remove high doorway thresholds Trim shrubbery along the pathway to the home.
- Keep walk areas clear of clutter, rocks and tools.
- Install adequate lighting by doorways and along walkways leading to doors.

## **All Living Spaces**

- Use a change in color to denote changes in surface types or levels.
- Secure rugs with nonskid tape as well as carpet edges.
- Avoid throw rugs.
- Remove oversized furniture and objects.
- Have at least one phone extension in each level of the home and post. Keep emergency numbers at each phone.
- Reduce clutter.
- Check lighting for adequate illumination and glare control.
- Maintain nightlights or motion-sensitive lighting throughout home.
- Use contrast in paint, furniture and carpet colors.
- Install electronic emergency response system if needed.

## **Bathrooms**

- Install grab bars on walls around the tub and beside the toilet, strong enough to hold your weight.
- Add nonskid mats or appliqués to bathtubs.
- Mount liquid soap dispenser on the bathtub-wall.
- Install a portable, hand-held shower head.
- Add a padded bath or shower seat.
- Install a raised toilet seat if needed.
- Use nonskid mats or carpet on floor surfaces that may get wet.

## **Kitchen**

- Keep commonly used items within easy reach.

- Use a sturdy step stool when you need something from a high shelf.
- Make sure appliance cords are out of the way.
- Avoid using floor polish or wax in order to reduce slick surfaces.

### **Living, Dining and Family Rooms**

- Keep electrical and telephone cords out of the way.
- Arrange furniture so that you can easily move around it (especially low coffee tables).
- Make sure chairs and couches are easy to get in and out of.
- Remove caster wheels from furniture.
- Use television remote control and cordless phone.

### **Bedroom**

- Put in a bedside light with a switch that is easy to turn on and off (or a touch lamp).
- Have a nightlight.
- Locate telephone within reach of bed.
- Adjust height of bed to make it easy to get in and out of.
- Have a firm chair, with arms, to sit and dress.

### **Stairways, Hallways and Pathways**

- Keep free of clutter
- Make sure carpet is secured and get rid of throw rugs.
- Install tightly fastened hand rails running the entire length and along both sides of stairs.
- Handrails should be 34 inches high and have a diameter of about 1.5 inches.
- Apply brightly colored tape to the face of the steps to make them more visible.
- Optimal stair dimensions are 7.2 inch riser heights with either an 11 or 12 inch tread width.
- Have adequate lighting in stairways, hallways and pathways, with light switches placed at each end.