

# PREVENTING FALLS

## Safety Checklist

**Nearly one-third of people over the age of 65 fall each year, and that figure increases to 50% by age 80.**

**F**or seniors, falls in and around the home are the most frequently occurring accident.

Here are **TWO** major causes of falls in and around the home:

In fact, falls are the seventh leading cause of death in people over age 65.

**Health and age-related changes, such as:**

A study reported in The New England Journal of Medicine found that preventing falls and the resulting injuries can reduce or delay the need to move to a long-term care facility.

- ▶ Use of certain medications
- ▶ Slow reflexes
- ▶ Poor eyesight
- ▶ Problems with balance

**After a disabling fall, the longer you wait for help, the greater the risk of serious complications and even death.**

**Dangerous situations in the home, such as:**

**Studies confirm that getting help quickly after a fall reduces the risk of:**

- ▶ Hospitalization by 26%
- ▶ Death by over 80%

- ▶ Slippery floors
- ▶ Poor lighting
- ▶ Electrical cords in pathways
- ▶ Loose rugs
- ▶ Raised thresholds
- ▶ Clutter

Most falls in the home occur in bathrooms, bedrooms and on stairs.

**The Checklist on the reverse side is designed to help you minimize the risk of falling in your home.**

1. Tinetti ME, Williams CS. Falls, injuries due to falls, and the risk of admission to a nursing home. N Engl J Med. 1997;337:1279-1284.

2. Roush RE, Teasdale TA, Murphy JN, Kirk MS. Impact of a personal emergency response system on hospital utilization by community residing elders. South Med J. 1995;88:917-922.

3. Gurley RJ, Lum N, Lo B, Katz MH. Persons found in their homes helpless or dead. N Engl J Med. 1996;334:1710-1716.



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# Fall Prevention Checklist

- > Have a lamp or light switch that you can easily reach without getting out of bed.
- > Use night-lights in the bedroom, bathroom and hallways.
- > Keep a flashlight handy.
- > Have light switches at both ends of stairs and halls. Install handrails on both sides of stairs.
- > Turn on the lights when you go into the house at night.
- > Add grab bars in shower, tub and toilet areas.
- > Use bath mats with suction cups.
- > Use non-slip adhesive strips or a mat in the shower or tub.
- > Consider sitting on a bench or stool in the shower.
- > Consider using an elevated toilet seat.
- > Wear non-slip, low-heeled shoes or slippers that fit snugly. Don't walk around in stocking feet.
- > Remove all extraneous clutter in your house.
- > Keep telephone and electrical cords out of pathways.
- > Tack rugs and glue vinyl flooring so they lie flat. Remove or replace rugs or runners that tend to slip, or attach non-slip backing. Ensure that carpets are firmly attached to the stairs.
- > Use helping devices, such as canes.
- > Keep snow and ice off entrances and sidewalks.
- > Purchase a step stool with high and sturdy handrails. Repair or discard wobbly step stools. Do not stand on a chair to reach things. Store frequently used objects where you can reach them easily.
- > Paint the edges of outdoor steps and any steps that are especially narrow or are higher or lower than the rest.
- > Paint outside stairs with a mixture of sand and paint for better traction. Keep outdoor walkways clear and well lit.
- > Review medications with your doctor or BLACKBURN'S pharmacist. Some drugs, including over-the-counter drugs, can make you drowsy, dizzy and unsteady.
- > Watch your alcohol intake. More than two drinks per day can cause unsteadiness.
- > Have your hearing and eyesight tested. Inner ear problems can affect balance. Vision problems make it difficult to see potential hazards.
- > Exercise regularly to improve muscle flexibility and strength.
- > If you feel dizzy or light-headed, sit down or stay seated until your head clears. Stand up slowly to avoid unsteadiness.

**If you have additional questions concerning fall prevention or medical equipment, please call or visit:**



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