

Floors

When you walk through a room, do you have to walk around furniture?

Ask someone to help you clear the path.

Do you have throw rugs?

Remove rugs or apply double-sided tape or non-slip backing.

Are the floors clear of clutter (paper, books, towels, shoes, etc.)?

Remove all clutter from the floors.

Do you have to walk over or around wires or cords?

Coil or tape cords and wires to the wall. If needed, have an electrician install another outlet.

Stairs and steps (inside and outside)

Is there clutter on the stairs (papers, shoes, books, etc.)?

Pick up and remove clutter.

Are any steps broken or uneven? Is the carpet loose or torn?

Fix broken or uneven steps and make sure carpet is firmly attached to every step.

Has your stairway light burnt out?

Ask a friend or relative to replace the bulb. If you do not have a light in the stairway, have an electrician install an overhead light and light switch at the top and bottom of the stairs.

Lifestyle changes

- Exercise regularly. Exercise makes you stronger and improves your balance and coordination.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist to review all of the medications you take, including over-the-counter medicine. Some medicine can make you sleepy or dizzy. Be sure to get up slowly after sitting or lying down.
- Have your vision checked at least once a year by an eye doctor. Poor vision can increase your risk of falling.
- Avoid going barefoot or wearing slippers. Wear shoes inside and outside of the house.
- Improve the lighting in your home. It is safest to have uniform lighting in all rooms. Put in brighter light bulbs and hang lightweight curtains or shades to reduce glare. Fluorescent bulbs are bright and cost less to use.
- Paint a contrasting color on the top edge of all steps so that you can more easily see each step. For example, paint a light-colored stripe on the edge of dark wood steps.



Fall Prevention

Home Safety Checklist

**Mercy**
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DES MOINES

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Falls are the leading cause of death and the most common cause of non-fatal injuries and hospital admissions among people age 65 and older.

Why and where do falls happen?

Falls can happen at home for many reasons. The most common causes of falls include environmental hazards, such as slippery floors and loose rugs; weak muscles; unstable balance; dizziness; vision problems and side effects from medications, such as dizziness and confusion.

Reduce your chances of falling at home

About half of all falls happen at home. Home modification—adapting or converting your environment to make tasks easier and reduce accidents—can reduce your chance of falling at home. This checklist will help you find, and fix, potential fall hazards in your home. Check each item as you complete the suggested change.

Are the handrails loose, broken or only on one side of the stairs?

- Fix loose handrails or install a new one. Handrails should be located on both sides of the stairs and should be as long as the stairs.*

Kitchen

Are items within easy reach?

- Rearrange your cabinets and keep frequently used items on the lower shelves, above waist level.*

Is your step stool unsteady?

- If you must use a step stool, purchase one with a bar to hold onto. Never use a chair as a step stool.*

Bathroom

Is the bathtub or shower floor slippery?

- Apply a non-skid rubber mat or self-stick strips to the floor of the shower or bathtub.*

Are you able to get on and off the table easily? Do you need support when getting in and out of the bathtub or shower?

- Have a carpenter install sturdy grab bars inside the bathtub and next to the toilet.*

Bedrooms

Is the light near the bed hard to reach?

- Place a lamp close to the bed within easy reach.*

Is the path from your bed to the bathroom well lit?

- If not, use a night-light to aid your vision during the night. Some night-lights automatically turn on in the dark.*

Additional home safety tips

- Keep emergency phone numbers by the phone. Write them in large print for quick easy viewing.
- Put a phone near the floor in case you fall and can't get up.
- Consider a personal alarm device. With the touch of a button, most devices call for assistance 24 hours per day. For more information, please call the Mercy Lifeline program at (800) 543-3546 ext. 2953.
- Test smoke detectors monthly and change batteries once per year.
- Install a carbon monoxide detector.