



## HOME SAFETY CHECK LIST

### THINGS YOU CAN DO TO KEEP YOUR SELF AND YOUR HOME SAFE.

#### PREVENTING FALLS

Many falls can be prevented. By reviewing the following information and making a few changes you can lower your risk of falling and make your home safer.

The following are common reasons people fall.

Review and check the items that apply to you and follow the helpful hints:

- Do you take 4 or more medications every day?**
  - Many medications can cause dizziness, drowsiness and balance problems.
  - Bring all your medicines (including herbals, supplements and over-the-counter medicines) to every doctor visit and try to use one pharmacy so possible problems can be addressed.
  - Ask your health care provider if any can be reduced or stopped.
  
- Have you, or others, have noticed a change in your hearing or vision?**
  - Hearing loss can be associated with dizziness. Vision loss can keep you from noticing tripping hazards.
  - Have your hearing and vision checked regularly
  
- Have you fallen or almost fallen 2 or more times in the past 6 months?**
  - You need to find out why you are falling, or even almost falling, to keep from getting badly hurt.
  - Talk to your doctor to find out more about exercises to keep you strong and improve your balance and ways to improve your nutrition and energy.
  
- Do you wear loose shoes or slippers, a long bathrobe, etc?**
  - Wear well-fitting footwear with non-skid soles.
  - Avoid clothing that drags on the ground.
  - Sit down rather than stand on one leg while dressing.

*Now take a look around your house. About half of all falls happen at home.*

## **DO YOU HAVE:**

### **☐ Worn, broken, or cluttered stairs?**

- Make needed repairs including attaching carpet firmly and adding non-skid, reflective tape or rubber stair treads.
- Make sure there is enough light and a handrail on at least one, preferably both, sides of the stairways.
- Avoid leaving books, clothes, electrical cords or other objects on the stairs or other walkways.
- Pay attention and don't hurry, especially when carrying things in both hands (like a laundry basket).

### **☐ Poor lighting?**

- Use the maximum watt light bulbs for the fixture. Consider adding night lights where overhead lighting is lacking, especially in the bathroom.
- Always keep a charged flashlight near your bed for emergencies.
- Allow time for your eyes to adjust when going from very light to dark areas.

### **☐ Throw rugs or slippery floors?**

- Remove all loose rugs or mats or ensure they are firmly secured with double-sided tape.
- Highly polished floors can be very slippery so use caution and consider non-slip products like wax or paint, on the surface.
- Wipe up all spills immediately.

### **☐ Frequently used items stored out of reach?**

- Move regularly used items so they are no higher than your eyes and no lower than your waist.
- If you must reach overhead, keep a sturdy stool handy.
- A long-handled grasper can be used to reach objects that are on high shelves or on the floor.

### **☐ A slippery bathroom floor, bathtub or shower?**

- Always use a non-skid bathtub/shower mat even with a textured tub floor and wipe up spills immediately.
- Consider lowering the water temperature to 120 degrees to prevent falls from attempts to avoid very hot water.
- If you bathe in a shower, consider sitting on a shower chair or tub seat and using a hand-held shower head.
- Consider a raised toilet seat and professionally installed safety grab bars. Do not use the sink, towel rack, toilet paper holder, soap dish or pipes as they are not intended to support weight.

**☐ Furniture that is hard to get in and out of?**

- Use or select firm furniture with armrests for support when getting up and down.
- Add pillows behind you so your feet can touch the floor.
- Get up slowly. If lying down, sit up for a while before you stand up.
- Ensure objects such as tables or counters are sturdy enough to support your weight before leaning on them.

**☐ A telephone that is not easy to get to?**

- Consider a cordless phone, or add another phone line and have a phone near the places you sit and sleep. Avoid running cords across walkways.
- Keep emergency numbers at each phone.
- Consider getting an emergency call system that will alert friends, family or a medical team if you get in a situation that is an emergency.

**☐ Outside hazards that need to be addressed?**

- Look around the area critically. Install handrails on all outside steps as well as lights that turn on automatically.
- Keep the entrance, steps, and pathways visible and free of clutter, leaves, garden tools, or debris.
- If you are going to use a ladder make sure it is in good condition and stable and have someone with you.
- Stay alert for unexpected obstacles such as single stairs, grease or oil spots.

**RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Let your doctor, nurse or physical therapist know if you have fallen or are worried about falls so we can refer you for the right services or medical equipment. Our goal is to help you prevent falls at home.

Physical and occupational therapists can perform a detailed falls and home safety assessment to make recommendations for exercises and medical equipment and supplies. The Jefferson Area Board for Aging can provide resource information. Call 817-5222.

If you live alone, consider a "buddy" who you call and/or who calls or checks on you.

**FIRE SAFETY**

**General**

- Plan ahead how you and everyone else would get out of the house in case of fire and practice your plan.
- Store flammable materials and electrical cords away from heat sources.
- Unplug any appliance or equipment that smokes or smells like it is burning.
- Check cords and wires regularly. If frayed, broken or brittle - fix or replace.

- Don't put cords or wires under rugs or tie in knots because they might be damaged.
- Extension cords should be used for temporary use only. Don't overload outlets. Use grounded outlets (the ones with three prongs) or use an adapter that has a wire, which attaches to the screw in your outlet.

### **Equipment**

- Use smoke detectors. They are best placed outside the bedrooms and at least one on each floor of your home. Batteries should be changed every year.
- Space heaters should be at least 36" from objects including walls, furniture, curtains or clothing, to keep those things from catching on fire.
- A carbon monoxide detector is recommended if you have burn fuel such as wood, gas, oil or kerosene or use a space heater. Carbon monoxide can build up in your home, especially in the winter when the windows are closed.
- Keep and know how to use a fire extinguisher, especially in the kitchen.

### **Smoking**

- If you or someone in your home smokes, use big, deep-dish ashtrays. Wet the butts and ashes before putting them in the trash. Never smoke in bed (or chair if sleepy).
- All smoking should be avoided if anyone in your home is on oxygen.
- Keep matches and lighters out of the reach of children.

### **Cooking**

- When cooking keep pot handles turned inward to avoid knocking them off the stove.
- If grease catches on fire, put a lid over the flames and turn the burner off. Never throw water on grease fires.

### **SAFETY FIRST**

Safety is everyone's responsibility. When you notice an unsafe situation, tell someone right away so it can be fixed.

If you have a medical emergency call 911 right away. Stay on the line and answer all the questions the dispatcher asks. Keep a list of emergency numbers near your phone where you or someone else can easily see them.

Use the medicines, equipment or supplies you were prescribed as instructed. Never lend any of these to nor take from someone else. Even if you compare your problems and needs and they sound the same they may have unique differences.