



HOUSING

Safe, comfortable housing for the elderly no. 9.913

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Quick Facts...

The basic need for housing is protection from the elements and intruders.

Front and back doors should have strong dead bolt locks.

Post emergency numbers and your address by each telephone.

Set the thermostat of the water heater at 120 degrees F or lower to prevent accidental scalding.

As a reminder to keep the smoke alarm working, change the batteries on your birthday.

Keep a lamp or flashlight and telephone within reach of your bed.

Make sure handrails are sturdy and securely fastened.

Our homes fulfill many needs for us. Often, the most basic need is for housing to protect us from the elements and intruders. Once we are warm and secure, other needs arise. Comfort and a place for self-expression is vital for our well-being. Home gives a feeling of independence. Our home should also be a place that is safe from accidents and injuries.

Shelter/Protection

One must feel safe and secure in order to be able to relax, so be security conscious. Front and back doors should have strong dead bolt locks. If your situation allows, install a burglar alarm system. A "peephole" for all your outside doors is a good idea so you can see who is at the door before you open it. The peephole should be installed at the proper height for you. The peephole should also allow you to see a range of 180 degrees from side to side.

Comfort/Self-expression

Not only should your home offer physical comfort, but it should provide emotional comfort as well. Surround yourself with things you like. These could be items from the past. Retrieve mementos from attics and old trunks that stir pleasant memories. There are many suitable places in today's world for objects and pictures from the past.

Safety

Home accidents are a major source of injuries and can cause death. The elderly are especially vulnerable to serious injuries from home accidents. Older bones are often less dense and more brittle, causing them to break more easily. A simple fall can become a serious, disabling injury that limits independence.

As we age, our senses of sight, touch, hearing, and smell tend to decline. Our physical abilities are reduced, making it more difficult for us to perform certain tasks such as stretching, lifting, and bending. In addition to these declines, we also experience a slowing of judgment and reaction time. As a result, we cannot respond as quickly as when we were younger. These normal changes in perception, physical abilities, and judgment make us more prone to accidents. Taking simple precautions and making adjustments in our home can help insure a safe, accident-free home.

On the following pages, you will find a series of checklists. Use the lists as you go through your home. Make a check mark next to those items or behaviors that you have. If there are some items that you do not check, then your home is not as safe as it could be. By improving those items not marked, you can make your home a safer and more comfortable place to live.

General Safety

- ___ Emergency numbers and your address are posted by each telephone.
- ___ Telephone can be reached from the floor.
- ___ Inside and outside door handles and locks are easily operated.
- ___ Lever-action door handles are used instead of round knobs.
- ___ Door thresholds are removed or are low and beveled.
- ___ Windows are easily opened from the inside, but have a secure locking system that can prevent someone from entering from the outside.
- ___ The thermostat of the water heater is set at 120 degrees F or lower to prevent accidental scalding.
- ___ Medications are stored in a safe place according to instructions on the label of the package or container.
- ___ Carpeting and rugs are not worn or torn.
- ___ Small, loose rugs have non-skid backing and are not placed in traffic areas of the home.
- ___ Appliances, lamps and cords are clean and in good condition.
- ___ There are no exposed bulbs in lamps or fixtures that can cause glare.
- ___ All electrical equipment bears the Underwriters Laboratories (UL) label.
- ___ Enough outlets are located where they are needed in every room.
- ___ Electrical overload protection is provided by circuit breakers, fuses or ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI).
- ___ If the house contains do-it-yourself wiring, the wiring has been checked for safety. (A municipal electrical inspector or an electrical contractor can do this for you.)
- ___ Electrical service has enough capacity to serve the house. (It is up to code. You can call your municipal electrical inspector to have the wiring in your house checked.)
- ___ Extension cords do not carry more than their proper load as indicated on the cord or appliance.
- ___ Electrical cords are placed out of the flow of traffic and out from underneath rugs and furniture.
- ___ Smoke alarms are present in the home and are in working order. One idea to help you remember to change the batteries is to replace them on your birthday.

Kitchen

- ___ The range and sink areas are well lighted.
- ___ If you have a gas range, it is equipped with pilot lights and an automatic cut-off in the event of flame failure. (Your local utility service representative can check this for you.)
- ___ The range is not located under a window with curtains which might fall onto a burner.
- ___ If you have an exhaust hood for the oven, it is provided with easily removable filters for proper cleaning.
- ___ The kitchen exhaust system is internally vented, discharges directly outside, or discharges through ducts to the outside and not into the attic or other unused space.
- ___ Countertop space and height is ample to keep carrying and lifting to a minimum.
- ___ Kitchen wall cabinets are not too high to be easily reached.
- ___ Lighting of counter tops is enough for meal preparation.
- ___ The light switch is located near the door.
- ___ Shiny or glaring work surfaces are not used.
- ___ Oven controls are clearly marked and easily grasped.
- ___ Oven controls are located on the front or side of the oven.

- ___ A single-lever mixing faucet is used.
- ___ Flooring is safe and non-slip.
- ___ When cooking, you turn pan handles away from other burners and the edge of the range.
- ___ When cooking, you avoid wearing garments with long, loose sleeves.
- ___ Hot pads and pan holders are kept near the range.
- ___ The exhaust fan is turned on when using the range.
- ___ If you have a microwave oven, operate it only when there is food in it. Use potholders to avoid burns.
- ___ Small appliances are unplugged when not in use.
- ___ Knives are kept in a knife rack or drawer.
- ___ Counter tops and work areas are cleared of all unnecessary objects.
- ___ Drawers and cupboards are kept closed.
- ___ A stepladder or step-stool is used rather than a chair to reach objects in overhead cabinets.
- ___ Grease or liquid spills are wiped up at once.

Stairways and Halls

- ___ Steps are in good condition and are free of objects.
- ___ Steps have non-skid strips or the carpeting on them is securely fastened and free of fraying or holes.
- ___ Smoke detectors are in place in hallways and near sleeping area.
- ___ Hallways and bathrooms are equipped with night-lights.
- ___ Sturdy handrails are on both sides of stairway and are securely fastened.
- ___ Light switches are located at the top and bottom of stairways and at both ends of long hallways.
- ___ Inside doors do not swing out over stair steps.
- ___ There is enough overhead space in the stairway to avoid bumping your head.
- ___ Room entrances do not have raised door thresholds.
- ___ It is easy to see the leading edge or nosing of each stair tread while walking down stairs.
- ___ Stairways and hallways are well lighted.

Living Room

- ___ Electrical cords are placed along walls (not under rugs) and away from traffic areas.
- ___ Chairs and couches are sturdy and secure.
- ___ Chairs and couches are not too low or too deep to get in and out of easily.
- ___ Chairs and couches have full arms to aid in sitting or rising.
- ___ The light switch is located near the door.
- ___ There is enough space to walk through the room, leaving clear passage ways for traffic.
- ___ Furniture that might be used for support when walking or rising is steady and does not tilt.

Bathroom

- ___ The bathtub or shower has non-skid mat or strips on the standing area.
- ___ Bathtub or shower doors are glazed with safety glass or plastic.
- ___ Grab bars are installed on the walls by the bathtub and toilet.
- ___ The towel bars and the soap dish in the shower stall are made of durable materials and are firmly installed.
- ___ A single-lever mixing faucet is used, or you have faucet handles that are easy to grasp.
- ___ Bathroom flooring is matte-finished, textured tile, or low pile commercial carpet (not throw rugs or bathmats).

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- ___ Bathroom has even lighting without glare.
- ___ The light switch is located near the door.
- ___ The bathroom door opens outward.
- ___ The bathroom has a safe supplemental heat source and ventilation system.
- ___ The outlets are ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI) that protect against electric shock.

Bedroom

- ___ A lamp or flashlight is kept within reach of your bed.
- ___ A night light is used to brighten the way to the bathroom at night.
- ___ Plenty of room is left for you to walk around the bed.
- ___ You have an adequate-sized nightstand or small table for the telephone, glasses or other important items.
- ___ There is a sturdy chair with arms where you can sit to dress.
- ___ Wall-to-wall low pile carpeting or a smooth surface floor covering is installed.
- ___ You use a bedroom on the first floor of the home.
- ___ A telephone jack is installed in the room.

OutdoorArea

- ___ Steps and walkways are in good condition.
- ___ Handrails are sturdy and securely fastened.
- ___ Doorways, steps, porches and walkways have good lighting.
- ___ Porches, balconies, terraces, window wells and other heights or depressions are protected by railings, closed with banisters, closed with fences, closed with accordion gates, or are otherwise protected.
- ___ Hedges, trees, or shrubs do not hide the view of the street from the driveway.
- ___ Garage doors are easy for you to operate, even when snow is piled against them.
- ___ The garage is adequately ventilated.