



**Patient Home
Environment Checklist**

Make your home

‘falls-free’

**Protect your independence
by reducing the chance of falling**

Each year, thousands of older people fall at home. Many of them are seriously injured and some are disabled. Falls are often due to hazards that are easy to overlook but easy to fix.

This checklist asks you about hazards found in your home. For each hazard the checklist tells you how to fix them.



Floors

Look at the floor in each room



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

Ask someone to move the furniture so that both your path and your access is clear to opening/closing curtains and windows.

- Do you have rugs or mats on the floor or are your carpets frayed, wrinkled or have curled edges?**

Remove the rugs on the floor or use double-sided tape or a non-slip backing so that the rugs won't slip. Consider whether they need to be replaced or can be "stretched" by professionals.

- Are there papers, books, towels, shoes, magazines, boxes, blankets or any other similar objects on the floor?**

Pick up things that are on the floor. Pack them away so that they don't fall onto the floor again.

- Do you have to walk over or around wires or cords, e.g. wires/cords for lamps, telephones, or extension cords?**

Secure (coil or tape) cords and wires next to the wall so that you can't trip over them. Try to organise things so that your appliances are close to a socket. Do not run cables across a room.

- Do you clean up spills immediately?**

If you do not do this straight away you may forget and slip over later.

- Are floor surfaces non-slip?**

You could cover them with non-slip mats, a fitted carpet or carpet tiles.

- Do you have a letterbox cage to help you get to your post easily?**

These are quite easy to fit and apart from saving you from stooping it will also stop papers being spread across the floor just inside the doorway which you could slip on.

Steps & stairs

Look at the stairs you use both inside and outside of your home

Are there papers, shoes, books or other objects on the stairs?

Pick up things on the stairs. Always keep objects off stairs.

Are some steps broken or uneven?

Ask someone to repair loose or uneven steps.

Do you have poor lighting or have only one light switch at the top or bottom of the stairs?

Use 100 watt bulbs (recommended) if the light fitting is capable of taking one of that size. A 20w low energy bulb can be left on permanently if required or use additional lighting, a table lamp or a night light to light the top and bottom of the stairs where possible. Night lights are low-energy lights that plug into a mains socket and emit a low-level light. It is recommended that you use the dusk-to-dawn type that switches on automatically.

Has the stairway light bulb stopped working?

Have a friend or family member change the light bulb for you.

Is the carpet on the steps loose or torn?

Ask someone to make sure that the carpet is firmly attached to every step, or remove the carpet and attach a non-slip rubber tread to the stairs.

Are your handrails loose or broken? Is there a handrail on both sides of the stairs and are they as long as the stairs?

Ask someone to refit loose handrails or put in new ones. Make sure handrails are on both sides of the stairs and are as long as the stairs.

Are you able to see the edges of the steps clearly?

Ask someone to paint a contrasting colour on the top edge of all steps so you can see the stairs better or alternatively ask someone to add non-slip masking tape. The tape must be kept in good condition to make sure it is not a trip hazard.

Lounge

Have a look around your lounge

Can you get out of your chair easily?

If your chair is too high or low ask someone to adjust it to make it easier. Have you got supports on chair arms to assist you getting up or down?

Do you have to lean or reach too far to open windows because furniture is in the way?

Ask someone to change the furniture layout to make it more accessible. Putting a chair in front of a window you use regularly is not a good idea.

Do you have casters under chairs which make them likely to slide as you get up?

Casters make furniture easier to move but can cause you to slide back just as you are getting up. Either remove the casters or fit cup shaped carpet savers on the casters.

If you fall do you have a system for calling for help?

A pendant alarm is a good way of doing this (See insert for details) and/or carrying a mobile phone with you at all times. Remember to keep your mobile phone charged.



Bathroom/WC

Look at your bathroom

Is the bath or shower floor slippery?

Put a non-slip rubber mat or self-stick strips on the floor of the bath or shower.

Is there a risk of falling on wet vinyl or tiled flooring?

Non-slip mats, a fitted carpet or carpet tiles should be used. Wet floor areas should be mopped as soon as possible.

Do you need any support when you get in and out of the bath/shower or up from the toilet?

Ask someone to fit a grab rail to the wall over the bath, in the shower and/or next to the toilet. A bath board, bath lift, toilet frames or raised seats may be more suitable.

Are you able to walk into the shower without stepping over a raised edge?

Are you able to get a bath replaced with a shower or wet room or make sure you have enough support with getting in and out with handrails.



Kitchen

Look at your kitchen and eating area



- Are the things that you often use located on high level shelves?**

Rearrange items in your cupboards and cabinets so that you can get to them easily. Keep things you often use on shelves between waist and eye level as stretching and reaching above head height can make you lose your balance.

- Is there good lighting over work areas?**

Ask someone to install adequate lighting.

- Is there a risk of falling on wet flooring especially near the sink and washing machine?**

Check the condition of the floor in these areas, consider a piece of non-slip matting or dry away moisture regularly with a mop.

- Consider using a trolley to help you carry food items from the kitchen to a dining area.**

Trolleys are not recommended as a main walking aid, it is purely to transfer items. If you are unsteady, a trolley shouldn't be used to help with this.

Bedrooms

Look at all your bedrooms



Is the light near the bed hard to reach?

Place a lamp close to the bed where it's easy to reach.

Is the path from your bed to the bathroom dark?

Put in a nightlight so that you can see where you are walking. Nightlights are low-energy lights that plug into a mains socket and emit a low-level light. It is recommended that you use the dusk-to-dawn type that switches on automatically.

Do you have sheets and bed covers trailing on the floor?

Tuck them out of the way when you first get out of bed: it is easy to trip up when moving around. It might be good for you to also consider bed linen that doesn't trail on the floor.

Is your bed at the right height? When sitting on the edge do your feet reach the floor?

If you have difficulty getting in or out of bed, you should consider a grab rail or some assistive equipment that can help you.

Is there a telephone next to your bed?

It is useful to have a telephone next to your bed in your bedroom. Also ensure your pendant alarm, should you have one, is within reach when you are in bed.

Are cords from electric blankets, lamps, telephones safely secured?

Coil or tape cords and wires next to a wall so that you can't trip over them.

If you use a walking aid, is it within easy reach, before you get up from bed?

Place your walking aid in easy reach before going to bed.

Lighting

Look at the lighting in your property

- Are your lights bright enough for you to see clearly?**

Ask someone to change the bulbs for brighter ones.

- Is there good lighting where you take your medication?**

It is important to see what is written on your medication so that you are sure you are taking it correctly.



Pets

- How accessible are your food bowls for your pets?**

Long handled food/water bowls can be purchased to minimize bending (available on internet).

- Can litter trays be positioned at a more accessible height?**

Ask your family/carers to help with emptying these or put them nearer to an external door.

- Consider dog-walking service if appropriate.**

Details can be found on the internet of local providers.

Garden

Have a look around



- Are your paths clear of leaves and overgrowing plants?**

Keeping your garden tidy/free of obstacles will make it a lot safer.

- Are your paving stones free from moss and algae?**

Moss and algae become slippery when wet. They thrive in moist shady areas so prevent them from growing by pruning overhanging plants and branches to improve the light and air circulation. You can buy products to apply and rinse off to remove algae or you can ask someone to remove it with a pressure washer.

- Do you take care if you have to go out in icy weather?**

Spread salt or salty sand on your steps if you need to go outside.

- If you are using a ladder, is it at a safe angle and anchored at its base?**

Never use a ladder when you are on your own, it is far safer to have someone with you who can hold the ladder steady. Alternatively ask someone to help you by using the ladder themselves.

- Do you have any uneven or broken paving slabs/steps?**

Ask someone to straighten them up or replace them for you.

- Do you use a power point fitted with a residual current device (RCD) when using power tools and electric mowers?**

An RCD will shut off the power point if an electrical fault develops or if you accidentally cut through the cable.

- Do you have a high step to get in and out of the property?**

Ask someone to fix an additional step and grab rail to the outside of your property. Remember to use your walking aid outdoors as well.



Other Safety tips/things to do to help prevent a fall

- ▶ Keep emergency numbers in large print near each phone. If you have a mobile make sure they are in your contacts.
- ▶ Think about wearing a pendant alarm device (that can be worn around the neck) which when pressed will notify someone that you have had a fall and can't get up. Alternatively a basic mobile phone can be purchased relatively cheaply, they can be obtained from many retailers or large supermarkets.
- ▶ Keep a torch by your bed and, if possible, one on each floor of your property to reduce the risk of falling if a power cut occurs. Make sure you have extra batteries for these as well.
- ▶ Wear correctly fitted shoes when inside and outside of the house. When inside avoid wearing loose-fitting slippers or going barefoot and the same applies for going outside.
- ▶ Try to clean up any spills straight away. Non-slip matting near the sink, washing machine, fridge or baths/shower may reduce the risk of slipping.
- ▶ Exercise regularly to improve your balance and make your legs stronger. This also helps you feel better and more confident.
- ▶ Have your Doctor or Pharmacist look at all the medicines you take, even over the counter medicines. Some medicines can make you sleepy or dizzy.
- ▶ Have your eyes checked by an Optician at least once a year and update your glasses.
- ▶ Get up slowly after you sit or lie down.
- ▶ Improve the lighting in your home. Put in brighter light bulbs. Florescent bulbs are bright and cost less to use.
- ▶ It's safest to have similar lighting in a room. Add lighting to dark areas and remember to hang lightweight curtains or shades to reduce glare.
- ▶ Remember to consider regular chiropody checks for nail cutting and foot care if you are unable to manage independently.

Sussex

Health and Care Partnership

You can get this leaflet in a format and language to suit your needs. If you would prefer this information in another language or alternative format (for example Easy Read, Braille, on audio tape or CD, or in large print), please contact us at sesstp.ucv@nhs.net

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