

Safe Seniors

The Home Safety Council understands that most older adults want to live in their own home as long as possible. The good news is living independently is possible with a few simple safety modifications. Work with the loved ones in your life to make sure your home includes the basic safety measures described below to protect against the most common home injuries.

Prevent Falls

- * Have handrails on both sides of stairs.
- * Have lots of lights at the top and bottom of the stairs.
- * Keep the stairs clear.
- * Carry small loads up and down stairs. Always hold onto a handrail.
- * It is easy to trip on small rugs. Tape them to the floor or do not use them at all.
- * Have nightlights in the bedroom, hall and bathroom.
- * Have a mat or non-slip strips in the tub and shower.
- * Have a bath mat with a non skid bottom on the bathroom floor.
- * Have grab bars in the tub and shower.
- * Keep sidewalks and paths clear.
- * Fix broken steps as soon as possible.

Prevent Fires

- * Make sure a smoke alarm is inside or near every bedroom. Test each smoke alarm every month. Push the test button until you hear a loud noise. Put new batteries in your smoke alarms at least one time each year.
- * If your smoke alarms are more than 10 years old, replace them with new smoke alarms.
- * If possible, get “interconnected” smoke alarms. These alarms are linked together so if one alarm sounds, they all go off.
- * In a fire, go to your meeting place outside. Do not go back inside for any reason.
- * Always stay in the kitchen while cooking.
- * Keep things that can burn, such as dishtowels, paper or plastic bags, and curtains at least three feet away from the range top.
- * Before cooking, roll up sleeves and use oven mitts. Loose-fitting clothes can touch a hot burner and catch on fire.
- * Keep space heaters at least three feet away from things that can burn, such as curtains or stacks of newspaper. Always turn off heaters when leaving the room or going to bed.

Prevent Scalds & Burns

- * Wear long oven mitts to protect your skin when cooking or handling hot food.
- * Food cooked in the microwave can get very hot and cause a burn. Use oven mitts when you take off the lid; stir and test food before serving to make sure it is cool enough to eat.
- * Set your water heater at 120 degrees F or just below the medium setting.
- * Fill the tub. Run your hand through the water to test for hot spots.
- * Install special tub spouts and shower heads that prevent hot water burns. These sense if the water gets hot enough to cause a burn and shuts off the flow of water.

- * If you burn your skin, cool it with running water. Do this right away.
- * Keep the burned area in cool water for 3 minutes or longer. Do not put ice, butter or lotion on the burn. This could make it worse.
- * Call your doctor or 9-1-1 if the burn looks bad.

Prevent Poisoning

- * When you take medicine or give medicine, read the label every time. Use a dropper or medicine spoon. Keep track of when medicine has been taken.
- * Be safe. Throw away medicines if you don't use them or they are old or the date has expired.
- * Do not put medicines in the sink or toilet. They can poison our water and make people and animals sick. Put the medicine in the garbage.
- * Take off the label before you throw the medicine container away if it has your name or any information about you.
- * Wrap the container in a paper or plastic bag. Close the bag and put it in the garbage. Keep children and pets away from the garbage.
- * If you have pills, crush them before you throw them out. Mix the pieces into old coffee grounds, sand, or kitty litter.
- * Know to call 1-800-222-1222 if someone takes poison. Call the Help number if you have a question about poisons.
- * Keep the number by every phone.
- * Call 9-1-1 if someone won't wake-up, is having trouble breathing or is having seizures.
- * If the person seems okay, but you think they may have taken poison, call 1-800-222-1222.
- * Keep medicines and cleaning products in their original containers with the original labels intact.
- * Store all dangerous products away from food and drinks.
- * Too much medicine or the wrong medicine can hurt or even kill you. Medicines for adults can kill children.