



Fall-Proofing a Home

A room-by-room checklist you can work through in a weekend

Falls in the home are rarely random. Most involve a hazard you can point at — a rug that slips, a stairway with no rail, a bathroom with nothing to hold on to. Remove the hazard and the fall often does not happen.

How to use this. Work through one room at a time. The bathroom is the highest priority: if you only get to one room this weekend, make it that one.

The bathroom

Start here. It is the most dangerous room in the house.

- ☐ Grab bar in the shower or bath, anchored into wall studs — not into tile or drywall alone
- ☐ A second grab bar beside the toilet, if strength or balance is limited
- ☐ Non-slip mat inside the shower or bath
- ☐ Non-slip mat outside it, fixed to the floor rather than loose
- ☐ A shower seat or bench
- ☐ A raised toilet seat, or a safety frame around the toilet
- ☐ Soap, shampoo and a towel all reachable without leaning or twisting

Stairs

Stairs account for a large share of serious fall injuries.

- ☐ A handrail running the full length of the stairs, on at least one side and ideally both
- ☐ Every handrail firmly anchored — a rail that wobbles offers no real support
- ☐ Non-slip treads or adhesive strips on wooden or tile stairs
- ☐ Carpet flat and fixed at every edge, with nothing lifting
- ☐ A light at the top and at the bottom, with a switch reachable from both ends
- ☐ Nothing stored on any step

Hallways and living areas

Loose rugs are the most common hazard here.

- ☐ Loose rugs removed, or held down with non-slip underlay and tape
- ☐ Particular attention to small rugs in routes used every day
- ☐ Walkways at least three feet wide along the routes used daily
- ☐ Footstools, low tables and anything at ankle height moved out of main paths
- ☐ Extension cords rerouted, or secured against the baseboards
- ☐ Floors clear of shoes, bags and boxes where people actually walk

Lighting

Older eyes need considerably more light than younger ones.

- ☐ Walk through the house after dark — daylight hides the problem
- ☐ A night light between the bedroom and the bathroom
- ☐ Motion-activated lights anywhere a switch would have to be found first
- ☐ A lamp or motion light within reach of the bed
- ☐ Brighter bulbs generally, in every room that gets used at night

The kitchen

Most kitchen falls start with a stretch or a bend.

- ☐ Everyday items moved to between waist and shoulder height
- ☐ A step stool with a handrail for higher shelves, rather than a stepladder
- ☐ Mats with non-slip backing at the sink and the stove
- ☐ A clear route between stove, sink and table

Outside

Wet surfaces and dim entrances do most of the damage.

- ☐ A handrail at every entry step, firmly fixed
- ☐ Paths and driveway even, with nothing raised to catch a foot
- ☐ Moss and algae cleared — both are slippery once wet
- ☐ A light that comes on before anyone steps outside after dark

Two things worth knowing

A grab bar that pulls out of the wall is more dangerous than no grab bar at all. If there is any doubt about what sits behind the tile, have it fitted by someone who can find the studs.

This checklist covers the home, not the person. Balance, eyesight and medication side effects all affect the risk of a fall, and none of them can be fixed with a non-slip mat. They are worth raising with a doctor or pharmacist.

Important note. This checklist is general information, not medical advice or a substitute for a professional home-safety assessment. Ask a doctor or pharmacist about personal fall risk, balance, vision, and medication questions; use a qualified professional for structural, electrical, or installation work.

Notes and what to buy
