

# Aging-in-Place Home Safety Checklist

A practical guide for adult children helping parents stay safe at home

## Walkways & General Safety

Falls often happen in everyday spaces—not just “problem areas.” Start by making movement through the home as easy and obstacle-free as possible.

- Remove throw rugs, or secure them with non-slip backing to prevent sliding
- Keep all pathways clear of electrical cords, clutter, and excess furniture
- Rearrange furniture to create wider, more open walking paths
- Ensure flooring is even—repair loose boards, tiles, or transitions between rooms
- Avoid slippery surfaces (especially hardwood or tile without traction)
- Install consistent, bright lighting throughout the home to eliminate shadows
- Add motion-sensor nightlights in hallways, bedrooms, and bathrooms

## Stairs & Entryways

Stairs are one of the highest-risk areas in any home. Even one missed step can lead to serious injury.

- Install sturdy handrails on both sides of all staircases
- Ensure railings are tightly secured and easy to grip
- Add non-slip treads or grip strips to each step
- Make sure stairways are well-lit, with light switches at both the top and bottom
- Clearly mark the edge of steps if depth perception is an issue
- Remove or minimize thresholds that could cause tripping
- Consider adding a ramp or stair lift if mobility is declining
- At entryways, ensure there is stable footing and protection from weather (no slick surfaces)

## Bathroom Safety (High-Risk Area)

Bathrooms are where many serious falls occur due to water, tight spaces, and frequent transitions in movement.

- Install grab bars near the toilet and inside the shower or tub (professionally mounted when possible)
- Use non-slip mats or adhesive strips inside the shower/tub
- Place non-slip mats on the bathroom floor outside the tub
- Consider a walk-in shower or walk-in tub to eliminate high step-overs
- Add a shower chair or bench for stability while bathing
- Install a handheld shower head for seated use
- Raise the height of the toilet seat if sitting/standing is difficult
- Ensure towels and toiletries are within easy reach—no stretching or bending required

## Bedroom Safety

Safety at night is critical—many falls happen when seniors wake up disoriented or in low light.

- Ensure the bed height allows for easy sitting and standing (not too low or too high)
- Place a lamp, phone, and any essentials within arm's reach of the bed
- Install nightlights from the bedroom to the bathroom to guide movement
- Keep the floor clear of clutter, cords, or loose rugs
- Consider bed rails if stability getting in/out of bed is an issue
- Make sure frequently used items (glasses, medications) are easily accessible

## Kitchen Safety

The kitchen should be functional without requiring reaching, climbing, or unnecessary strain.

- Store everyday items (plates, food, utensils) at waist-to-shoulder height
- Avoid the need for step stools or climbing to reach items
- Check that appliances are simple to use and in good working condition
- Consider automatic shut-off devices for stoves or small appliances
- Keep commonly used items in consistent, easy-to-find locations
- Ensure flooring is non-slip and spills are cleaned immediately
- Keep a fire extinguisher easily accessible and ensure your parent knows how to use it

## Lighting & Visibility

Poor lighting is one of the most overlooked—but most dangerous—factors in fall risk.

- Increase bulb brightness where safe (especially in hallways, stairs, and bathrooms)
- Add layered lighting: overhead, task lighting, and nightlights
- Install motion-sensor lights in key areas for automatic illumination
- Reduce glare from windows or shiny flooring surfaces
- Ensure all light switches are easy to access (consider rocker switches if needed)
- Use contrasting colors where helpful (e.g., stair edges, furniture vs. flooring)

## Emergency Preparedness

Even with prevention, accidents can still happen. Preparation is just as important as prevention.

- Ensure a phone is always within reach in key areas (bedroom, living room, bathroom)
- Program emergency contacts into speed dial
- Post a visible list of emergency numbers near the phone
- Consider a medical alert system or wearable emergency device
- Test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors regularly
- Create a simple, visible emergency plan (who to call, what to do)
- Ensure the home address is clearly visible for emergency responders

## Bonus: Lifestyle & Support Factors

Safety isn't just about the home—it's also about health, habits, and support systems.

- Review medications with a doctor or pharmacist for side effects like dizziness or fatigue
- Schedule regular vision and hearing checks
- Encourage supportive footwear (non-slip, well-fitting shoes—no loose slippers)
- Consider in-home help, companionship, or check-in systems
- Evaluate whether living alone is still the safest option as needs change
- Encourage regular movement and strength exercises to maintain balance

### Final Self-Check

Ask yourself honestly:

If my parent had to move through this home at night, alone, and slightly unsteady... would they be safe?

If the answer is “not completely,” start with small changes.

Even a few adjustments can dramatically reduce the risk of a serious fall.

### Disclaimer

This checklist is provided for informational and educational purposes only and is not intended as medical, professional, or safety advice. Every individual and home environment is different, and the recommendations provided may not be suitable for all situations.

You should consult with a qualified healthcare provider, licensed contractor, occupational therapist, or other appropriate professional before making changes to a home or care plan—especially if your parent has specific medical conditions, mobility challenges, or cognitive concerns.

While these suggestions are designed to help reduce the risk of falls and improve safety, no environment can be made completely risk-free. The author makes no guarantees regarding outcomes and is not responsible for any injuries, losses, or damages that may occur as a result of using this information.

By using this guide, you acknowledge and accept full responsibility for any actions taken.