

HOME SAFETY ASSESSMENT

Checklist



As physical abilities change with age, it may become more difficult to manage a home safely. It is very important to evaluate your home and whether it supports your ability to carry out everyday activities safely.

This easy-to-use checklist provides a guide to the features of your home that may pose risk. To learn about possible home modifications that can make your home safer, you may want to consult with a health professional such as an occupational therapist. Any home modifications you decide to make should be conducted by licensed and bonded contractors who are familiar with Universal Design principles.

To use this checklist, walk through your home and consider each of the features listed. The first step is for you to evaluate whether your home is safe for you now. This list is a recommendation, there may be other things to consider.

Topics to Address:

Safety assessment of the entry to the home

Safety assessment of the inside of the home

Specific safety considerations for people with Alzheimer's disease, dementia or other cognitive impairments

Release from liability: Any modifications the individual or family makes to the home are the sole responsibility of the homeowner. The Financial Professional, Legg Mason, and The Center for Innovative Care in Aging at the Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing are held harmless and released from any liability that may occur from making a home modification.

INVESTMENT PRODUCTS: NOT FDIC INSURED • NO BANK GUARANTEE • MAY LOSE VALUE

Entry to the home

Adequate lighting

	Yes	No	If no, plan of action
Driveway			
Garage			
Walkways			
At all doors			
Near the trash area			
Any other areas of the yard that are used after dark?			

Driveway

	Yes	No	If no, plan of action
Is the driveway smooth and evenly paved?			
Is the transition between the driveway and surrounding surfaces (such as the yard) smooth and even, free of ruts and other things (rocks) that could cause tripping?			
Is the slope of the driveway low enough that it does not cause a problem?			
Do you shovel your own driveway if/when it snows?			

Walkways to and around home

	Yes	No	If no, plan of action
Are walkways smooth and level (no cracks, gaps or other tripping hazards)?			
Are steps along walkways clearly visible?			
Do they have handrails?			
Are transitions between different surfaces even and level?			
If there are steeply inclined walkways, do they have sturdy, easy-to-grasp handrails?			
Are shrubs, bushes and yards trimmed back or removed so they do not obstruct the walkway (potential tripping hazard)?			
Do you shovel your own walkways if/when it snows?			

Steps to the doors

	Yes	No	If no, plan of action
Do all steps have sturdy, easy-to-grasp (cylindrical) rails on both sides?			
Are the stairs and multiple steps of equal height?			
Are the stair treads sturdy, level and in good condition?			

Entry to the home (continued)**Garage**

	Yes	No	If no, plan of action
Are there adequate overhead lights in the garage?			
Is there a clear pathway to walk through?			
Do entry stairs or ramps to the house have railings?			
Are ramps rising at a minimum slope of 12:1? (12 inches of ramp length for every one inch of height is standard; however, 16:1 is recommended.)			

Ramps (if applicable)

	Yes	No	If no, plan of action
Do ramps have sturdy rails on both sides?			
Are the rails cylindrical for easy grasping?			
Do ramps have smooth transitions from ramp surface to ground surface?			
Do ramps have non-skid surfaces or have non-skid strips been added?			
Do ramp railings extend beyond the ramp to help people transition off the ramp?			
Do ramps have sufficient width of at least 36 inches between handrails?			

Entry porches/decks/landings

	<u>Front</u>		<u>Rear</u>		
	Yes	No	Yes	No	If no, plan of action
Have all potential tripping hazards, such as clutter and overgrown bushes, been removed?					
Is the landing wide and deep enough to safely open the door?					
Is there a clearly visible, easily reachable doorbell?					
Do porches and decks have railings or barriers to prevent someone from falling off?					
Are the railings securely fastened?					
Does the decking have secure, even floorboards with no protruding nails?					
Is there a non-skid surface on the porch/deck/landing?					
Do doormats have non-skid backing with no upturned corners?					

Entry to the home (continued)**Exterior doors**

	<u>Front</u>		<u>Rear</u>		If no, plan of action
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
If necessary, are doorways wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs?					
Is a lock or deadbolt present on interior of door?					
Are latches and door handles in good condition and easy to use?					
If someone has trouble turning a doorknob, are there lever handles?					
Do the doors open and close easily without sticking?					
Do doors on springs close slowly enough?					
Is the threshold at the door less than one inch high?					
Do glass sliding doors have decals at eye level?					

Other outdoor area concerns

	<u>Front</u>		<u>Rear</u>		If no, plan of action
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
If there is a patio or deck, is it level, smoothly surfaced and free of tripping hazards?					
Do these areas have safe, accessible stairs and railings?					
Have working chimneys been professionally inspected and cleaned within the last year?					

Inside the home**Entryways and vestibules**

	<u>Front</u>		<u>Rear</u>		If no, plan of action
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Have throw rugs (potential tripping hazards) been removed?					
Is there a clear pathway (devoid of clutter) through the entry hall?					
Are all cords and wires out of the pathway?					
Are thresholds low enough (less than 1 inch) so someone does not trip over them?					
Is there adequate lighting?					
Is the light switch at the entrance to the room?					
Is the entryway wide enough for a wheelchair/walker?					

Inside the home (continued)

Hallways

	#1		#2		#3		
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	If no, plan of action
If people need support, are there handrails along the hall?							
Are halls free of clutter and other tripping obstacles?							
Are carpet runners tacked down or do they have anti-skid backing?							
Are thresholds less than one inch, so they are not tripping hazards?							
Are halls wide enough for a wheelchair/walker?							
Is there adequate lighting?							
Is there a light switch at both ends of the hall?							

Doors and doorways

	Yes	No	
	Yes	No	If no, plan of action
Do all doors open easily?			
Are thresholds less than one inch?			
Are latches and door handles in good condition and easy to use?			
If someone has trouble turning a doorknob, are there lever handles?			

Interior stairs

	2nd floor		Basement		Other		
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	If no, plan of action
Do stairs have sturdy rails on both sides that are securely fastened?							
Do rails continue onto the landings?							
Are the stair treads sturdy, not deteriorating or broken?							
Are edges of stair treads clearly visible (no dark, busy patterns)?							
Are stair pads in good repair (tacked down, in one piece)?							
Are stair treads slip-resistant?							
(If carpeted) Is carpet securely attached, not worn/frayed?							
Are top and bottom steps highlighted?							
Are stairs free of clutter?							
If stairs have a low, overhanging beam that people could bump their heads on, has it been padded?							
Are stairs and landings well lit, with light switches at both top and bottom?							

Inside the home (continued)

Living room (LR), dining room (DR), family room (FR) and other

	<u>LR</u>		<u>DR</u>		<u>FR</u>		<u>Other</u>		If no, plan of action
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Is the lighting adequate?									
Is there a light switch at the entrance to the room?									
Is there a clear, unobstructed path through the room (no clutter, cords, wires or other things to trip over)?									
Are thresholds minimal and carpet binders tacked down?									
Are carpets in good condition (not frayed or turned up, torn, or with worn spots that someone could trip over)?									
Are plastic runners/carpet protectors tacked down (not folded or turned up at edges)?									
Do throw rugs have anti-skid backing and no upturned corners?									
Is tile/linoleum free of chips or tears and not slippery?									
Are bare wood floors slip-resistant?									
Is there at least one comfortable chair people can get in and out of safely and easily?									
Is furniture stable?									
Do tables have rounded edges that are clearly visible (no sharp edges, not made of glass)?									
Do windows open easily?									
Are shades and blinds easy to open and securely attached?									
Are electrical cords run behind furniture and not across the floor or under the rug?									

Bathrooms

	<u>Bath #1</u>		<u>Bath #2</u>		If no, plan of action
	Yes	No	Yes	No	

Sinks

Is the sink wheelchair-accessible or can someone sit at the sink?			
Are mirrors at an appropriate height?			

Tub/shower

Are there sturdy grab bars in the tub and/or shower, if needed?			
Is the shower curtain bottom a tripping hazard?			
Are toiletries in the tub easily reached from sitting and standing positions?			
Is there a non-skid bathmat in the bathtub?			
Is there a hand-held shower head?			

Inside the home (continued)**Bathrooms** (continued)

	<u>Bath #1</u>		<u>Bath #2</u>		If no, plan of action
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Are tub/shower/faucets easy to use and read (hot/cold clearly marked)?					
If needed, is there a tub or shower seat?					
If shower/tub doors are present, are they made of a non-shattering material?					

Toilet

Are there sturdy grab bars at the toilet (or toilet arms and a raised seat)?			
Is toilet paper easily reachable from the toilet seat?			
Is the toilet seat in good condition and securely fastened?			
Is there a night-light in the bathroom?			

Kitchen

	Yes	No	If no, plan of action
Are frequently used items visible and easily reached (front of pantry and refrigerator)?			
Are sink faucets easy to reach?			
Is it easy to determine where the hot and cold areas of the faucet are?			
If necessary, have anti-scald or hot-water temperature devices been installed?			
Have timers been installed on the oven and cooktop?			
Are burners and control knobs clearly labeled and easy to use?			
Are the controls on the front of the stove, not the back?			
Is there a close resting place nearby for hot vessels coming out of the oven?			
Is glass cookware being used so the person can see the food being cooked?			
Is the microwave easy to read, reach and operate?			
Are towels, curtains, potholders and other objects that might catch fire located away from the range?			
Is there a step stool that is stable nearby?			
Is the kitchen ventilation system or range exhaust functioning properly?			
Is there good lighting over work areas?			
Is there a fire extinguisher nearby?			

Laundry

	Yes	No	If no, plan of action
Is there a light switch at the entry?			
Is there sufficient lighting?			
Is the route to the laundry safe (including all stairs and railings)?			
Are the appliances at the right height, so it is easy to get clothes in/out of the washer and dryer?			
Are the control knobs easy to reach, read and operate?			
Are laundry supplies easy and safe to reach?			
Is there a non-slip floor surface?			
Are tripping hazards off the floor (laundry basket or dirty clothes)?			

Bedroom(s)

	<u>Bed #1</u>		<u>Bed #2</u>		
	Yes	No	Yes	No	If no, plan of action
Is there a light at the entrance to the room?					
Is a light reachable from the bed?					
Can bureau drawers be reached (best height of the drawer) and opened easily?					
Is there a clear, unobstructed path through the room (clutter and furniture are out of the way)?					
Are cords and wires off the floor?					
Do throw and area rugs have non-slip backing and no upturned corners?					
Are wood and linoleum floors non-skid?					
Is carpet smooth (no folds or holes) and tacked down?					
Are curtains and bed coverings off the floor, so they are not tripping hazards?					
Is there support for getting in and out of bed?					
Is there a place to sit and get dressed?					
Are windows easy to open and close?					
Are window blinds and shades working properly and easy to open?					
Are blinds and shades properly secured?					
Is there a telephone within reach of the bed?					
Are any assistive walking devices (cane/walker/wheelchair) within reach of the bed?					
Is there a flashlight or some other form of non-electric lighting within reach of the bed in case of a power outage?					
Are electric blankets dangerously folded, covered by other objects or tucked in when in use? Is the power cord pinched or crushed by the bed, between a wall or the floor?					

Closet(s)**Closet #1** **Closet #2**

Yes No Yes No

If no, plan of action

Are shelves and clothes easy to reach?

Have closet organizers been installed to maximize use of space?

Are closets organized so clothes are easy to find?

Is clutter or other tripping hazards off the floor?

Do closets have lights that are easy to find and reach?

Are closet doors easy to open?

If a closet has sliding doors, do they stay on track?

Specific safety considerations for people with Alzheimer's disease, dementia or other cognitive impairments**General considerations**

Yes No

If no, plan of action

Is there a safe outdoor area that the person with dementia can use without wandering away (escape-proof porch or deck, fenced-in yard with locked gate)?

Have poisonous plants and shrubs/plantings with berries been removed?

Are there security locks on all exterior doors (double keyed and installed out of sight, etc.)?

Is a key hidden outside in case the person locks out the caregiver?

Are exterior and other doors to off-limits areas alarmed?

Is access to stairwells, storage areas, basements, garages and other off-limits areas controlled (with locks, secure gates, Dutch doors, etc.)?

Has access to home offices and computer/home finance areas been controlled?

If necessary, can all doors to off-limits areas be secured or disguised?

Are there eye-level decals on all glass doors and large picture windows?

Can all windows be securely locked?

Is there a drawing, picture or short instruction list for tasks or a daily schedule?

Is there use of colors or color contrast to highlight an object?

Is there a safe, clear pathway through the house where the person can walk or wander safely without tripping, knocking into or damaging something?

If necessary, are childproof plugs in all unused electrical outlets?

Are radiators and hot-water pipes that the person might touch covered?

Are all prescription medications and over-the-counter medicines locked up?

Specific safety considerations for people with Alzheimer's disease, dementia or other cognitive impairments (continued)

General considerations (continued)

	Yes	No	If no, plan of action
Is alcohol out of sight and locked up?			
Are plastic/dry cleaner bags out of reach (could cause choking or suffocation)?			
Are all weapons locked up or removed from the house (guns, knives, etc.)?			

Orientation considerations

	Yes	No	If no, plan of action
Are there signs, arrows and/or photographs pointing to the bathroom, bedroom and other places the person needs to find?			
Are doors that the person needs to use highlighted (signs, color)?			
Is there a photo or memento on the door to help someone find his/her bedroom?			
Are there night-lights or light strips leading to the bathroom from the bedroom?			
Is the bathroom door left open when not in use to serve as a visual cue?			
Are closets, drawers and cabinets that hold things the person can use labeled?			

Hallucinations/misrecognition considerations

Are light levels even so that shade and shadows are kept to a minimum?		
Has ominous-looking artwork been removed (masks, distortions, abstract work)?		

Considerations if the person gets upset by his/her or another person's image

Are windows covered at night so the person cannot see his/her reflection?		
Are mirrors covered?		
Have portraits and large photographs of people been removed or covered?		

Bathroom safety checklist

	<u>Bath #1</u>		<u>Bath #2</u>		
	Yes	No	Yes	No	If no, plan of action
Have all medicines and razors been put away?					
Have all cleaning agents been put away?					
Are other harmful objects removed from the cabinets and fixtures?					
Are sink faucets easy to reach?					
Is it easy to determine where the hot and cold areas of the faucet are?					
Is a shower or bath seat accessible, allowing a person to direct desired water flow?					

Bathroom safety checklist (continued)

	Bath #1		Bath #2		If no, plan of action
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Is it easy to mix the water temperature?					
Have anti-scald devices been installed?					
Does the color of the toilet fixture and/or seat contrast with the wall and floor for easy identification?					
Have all trash cans been removed if the person uses them as a toilet?					
Are there night-lights/signs giving directions to the bathroom and fixtures?					
Are instructions posted by the toilet, sink and shower/tub?					

Kitchen safety checklist

	Yes	No	If no, plan of action
Are all drawers and cabinets with only safe objects labeled?			
Are childproof locks on drawers and cabinets that are off-limits?			
Has access to the stove been controlled (knobs removed, lock on oven door, stove connected to hidden circuit breaker or gas valve)?			
If necessary, has access to the refrigerator and freezer been controlled with a refrigerator lock?			
Is there a night-light in the kitchen (for safe midnight snacking)?			
Have sharp knives and other dangerous implements been removed or locked up?			
Has excess clutter been removed from countertops and tables?			
Has the temperature for the hot-water tap been reduced to avoid scalding?			
Have all vitamins, sweeteners, over-the-counter medicines and prescription drugs been removed (or left out in limited quantities)?			
Have all poisonous cleaning agents and hazardous materials been removed or locked up?			
Have all "fake" food items been removed (wax/ceramic fruit, food-shaped magnets)?			
If necessary, has the kitchen been closed off?			

Bedroom safety checklist

	Yes	No	If no, plan of action
Are there night-lights (and signs, if necessary) along the path to the bathroom?			
Is there a monitor/intercom between the person's and the caregiver's areas?			

Bedroom safety checklist (continued)

	Yes	No	If no, plan of action
Have clutter and other potentially dangerous items (cologne, after-shave lotion, deodorant, etc.) been removed from dresser tops and floors?			
Are drawers organized simply and labeled?			
Are hazardous items removed, such as electric blankets and hot-water bottles?			

Specific safety considerations for people with Alzheimer's disease, dementia or other cognitive impairments (continued)**General home safety concerns**

	Yes	No	If no, plan of action
Is emergency contact information easily accessible and ready to use?			
Are smoke detectors installed and working on every level of the home, outside sleeping areas and inside bedrooms?			
Are carbon monoxide (CO) alarms installed and working on every level of the home (outside sleeping areas and inside bedrooms)?			
Is there a safe place outside to hide a key to the house for emergency entry?			
Are all portable space heaters and wood-burning heating equipment at least three feet from walls, furniture, curtains, rugs, newspapers or other flammable materials?			
Are all medications in child-resistant containers clearly marked with the medication name and dose?			
Is the area well lit where medications are kept?			
Is the water heater set to no more than 120 degrees Fahrenheit?			
Are containers of flammable and combustible liquids stored outside of the house?			
Are portable generators not operating in the basement, garage, or anywhere near the house?			
Is there an emergency exit plan?			
Are small appliances, such as hair dryers, toasters, etc., unplugged when not in use?			
Are electrical outlets or switches in good working order and not unusually warm or hot to the touch?			
Do all electrical outlets and switches have cover plates installed so no wiring is exposed?			
Are all Ground-Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) receptacles working properly?			

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