

# HOME SAFETY CHECKLIST FOR OLDER ADULTS

Household accidents and crime pose two of the greatest threats to the lives, safety and independence of older persons. A fall, a fire, or a home invasion can easily result in permanent injury, a move to a nursing home, or even death.

Please use this checklist to inspect your home for hazards and potential problems. After you complete your inspection, document all problem areas you've found, and the corrective action to be taken. For information on home repairs and safety modifications, call your state or regional Office on Aging, or the League of Human Dignity Office nearest you:

Omaha, NE:	402-595-1410	Council Bluffs, IA:	712-323-6811
Lincoln, NE:	402-441-7650	North Platte, NE:	308-532-4922
Norfolk, NE:	402-371-4475	Scottsbluff, NE:	308-632-0472
Kearney, NE:	308-224-3633		

An Occupational Therapist can perform a thorough home safety evaluation, and recommend structural changes and assistive devices to meet the specific needs of an elderly or disabled person. Medicare and Long-Term Care insurance may cover all or part of such an evaluation. Consult your health care provider to arrange a home safety evaluation.

## INSPECT ALL LIGHT FIXTURES:

Yes No

- Is lighting adequate and equally distributed throughout the home? Several light sources with lower-wattage light bulbs are better than one high-wattage bulb that may cause glare.
- Are light bulbs the appropriate wattage for lamps? Each lamp should have a sticker or an instruction pamphlet stating the maximum safe wattage. Lamps with pull chains are easier to operate for arthritic fingers.
- Are night-lights used in the bathroom, bedroom and in the connecting hallway?
- Are working flashlights kept by the bed and on all levels of the home in case of emergency? During a power failure, small, battery-operated LED lanterns are safer to use and provide more light than candles.

**INSPECT ALL ELECTRICAL CORDS AND OUTLETS:**

**Yes No**

- Are any outlets overloaded?
- Are outlets easy to reach? Outlets can be moved higher on the wall, or furniture can be re-arranged to avoid blocking them.
- Do any cords have frayed ends or cracked surfaces?
- Are all cords gathered, tied back and kept away from traffic areas?

**INSPECT ALL PIECES OF FURNITURE:**

**Yes No**

- Are rooms filled with too much furniture to allow safe walking?  
Can furniture be removed or re-arranged to correct this?
- Are all pieces of furniture sturdy and not easily tipped?
- Are chairs easy to get in and out of? Avoid deep, soft chairs and those without arms. Consider a “lift “chair for a person with mobility problems.
- Are chair arms sturdy and easy to grasp for support?

**INSPECT APPLIANCES:**

**Yes No**

- Do irons, portable heaters and other appliances have automatic shut-off features to prevent overheating if mistakenly left on?
- Do heating pads and electric blankets have timed auto-shutoff functions to prevent overheating and to avoid prolonged exposure?
- Are the washer and dryer located on the main floor to avoid trips up and down basement stairs? Small, stackable units often fit well in a kitchen or utility room.

- Are telephones located on each level of the home, and positioned low enough to be reached in case of a fall? Consider a carry-along cell phone. Program all phones with emergency and family members' phone numbers.
- Do portable space heaters have screens to prevent contact with external objects? Space heaters should be kept away from flammable objects. Make sure all kerosene and natural gas space heaters have adequate ventilation.
- Do all fireplaces have spark-screens? Working fireplaces and chimneys should be inspected/serviced annually.
- Are smoke/carbon monoxide detectors located on each level of the home, including the basement and near bedrooms? Are their batteries checked at six-month intervals and changed annually? A simple rule of thumb is to routinely test detectors and replace batteries in the spring and fall when clocks are adjusted forward/backward.
- Have the heating and cooling systems been inspected and serviced within the past year? Ask the technician to also test carbon monoxide detectors to insure they are still functioning.
- Is the water heater thermostat set no higher than 125 degrees to prevent scalding?

**INSPECT ALL FLOOR SURFACES:**

**Yes No**

- Are items (boxes, books, etc.) stacked inappropriately on floors, presenting a risk for falls?
- Are any floor tiles/boards loose, broken, or missing?
- Are carpet and linoleum edges firmly secured to the floor?
- Are area and throw rugs secured to the floor with rubber backing or double-faced adhesive tape? (Throw rugs of any kind are strongly discouraged!)
- Is carpeting too thick or plush to walk on safely?

**FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED PERSONS:**

- Do carpets have contrasting colors from one room to another, particularly where one must step up or down?
- Have all raised sills in doorways been eliminated or marked with color-contrast tape for better visibility?

**INSPECT ALL STAIRWAYS:**

Yes No

- Are stairways well lighted? Light switches should be located at both the top and bottom of each staircase.
- Are any steps cracked, loose or sagging?
- Are banister rails easy to grasp, sturdy, and well anchored?
- Do banisters extend slightly beyond the top and bottom steps?
- Are stairways cluttered with boxes or other objects?
- Do interior doors swing out over stair wells? This is a definite falls hazard.
- Are stairways carpeted, or do they have non-skid vinyl/rubber treads in contrasting colors to increase visibility? Strips of florescent tape placed on the top and bottom steps are helpful.

**INSPECT THE BATHROOM(S):**

Yes No

- Would a raised toilet seat or "right-height" toilet make it easier for the person to get on and off the commode?
- Are grab rails installed near the toilet and tub to provide assistance and prevent falls?
- Are non-skid strips or mats used both inside and just outside the tub? Only use mats with a non-skid or rubber backing.

Would adding a shower chair and a hand-held shower wand (or a walk-in tub) make bathing easier?

Should a urinal or commode be considered for use in the bedroom?

### **INSPECT THE KITCHEN:**

**Yes No**

Do deep or floor-level cabinets have slide-out shelves or storage baskets?

Are frequently used items stored in easy-to-reach places? Use only a sturdy, wide-based step-stool to reach high shelves.

Do you use a wheeled cart to move heavy or bulky objects in and around the kitchen? An apron with pockets can help you carry small objects.

Is the kitchen arranged so that food preparation and cleanup can be done from a chair if prolonged standing is a problem?

Are all toxic and flammable substances stored away from food products and the stove?

If you use a gas range, is it equipped with a pilot light and automatic shut-off in case of flame failure? An auto-shutoff device can be installed on an electric range.

Are electrical appliances and cords kept away from sources of heat and water, such as the sink and stove? Make sure that all electrical receptacles that power countertop appliances are protected by Ground-Fault circuit Interrupters (GFCI's).

### **INSPECT ALL DOORS:**

**Yes No**

Are door knobs easy to grasp for arthritic hands? (Consider replacing round knobs with lever handles).

Can raised door sills be eliminated to avoid tripping?

- Does the garage door have an automatic opener?
- Can the bathroom door be installed to open outward to permit easy rescue in case of a fall?

**INSPECT THE HOME'S EXTERIOR:**

Yes No

- Are concrete and brick areas free from large cracks, broken and uneven surfaces? Textured concrete surfaces lessen the risk of falls.
- Are wooden decks and stairs stable and free from cracks, sagging and exposed nail heads?
- Are banister rails easy to grasp, sturdy, and well anchored?
- Do banister rails extend slightly beyond the top and bottom steps?
- Are gutter downspouts extended away from walks and driveway to avoid icy patches?

**INSPECT FOR THE FOLLOWING SECURITY MEASURES:**

Yes No

- Do all exterior doors have dead-bolt locks? Dead-bolt locks should also be placed on doors leading from the garage or basement into the house. Double cylinder dead-bolts that only open with a key from both sides should be installed on exterior doors with windows.
- Do all screen/storm doors lock from the inside?
- Are basement/garage windows secured with "burglar-bars"?
- Do all first-floor windows have devices to prevent them from being raised high enough to permit entry from the outside?
- Are boards placed along the inside bottom tracks of sliding glass doors and windows to prevent them from being opened from the outside?

- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Are "dusk-to-dawn" or "motion detector" lights installed on the exterior?
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Should you consider installing a security system and a doorbell camera?

**PROBLEMS TO CORRECT:**

**The Home Instead Center for Successful Aging**  
**Nebraska Medicine - UNMC**  
**730 S. 38<sup>th</sup> Ave., Omaha, Nebraska**  
<https://www.nebraskamed.com/geriatrics>

You may download and print a copy of this and other patient education documents from the resources link on our Internet web site: <https://www.nebraskamed.com/geriatrics/resources>

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