

# **Strategies for Seniors in Reducing the Risk of Falls**

## **A General Safety and Home Fall Prevention Checklist**

### **for Older Adults**

#### **Handout 1**

#### **Entering Your Home: Front Door or Garage**

- Landscaping does not hide the street from the driveway.
- Landscaping does not encroach on the walkway.
- If there are steps up to the door:
  - They are not broken or uneven.
  - There is a handrail.
  - The steps are free from debris and clutter.
- If there is a ramp:
  - It is at a 45 degree angle or less.
- There is good lighting for when arriving home after dark.
- The doorbell volume is loud enough to be heard inside the house.
- Threshold is flush with the floor.
- Garage door is easy to operate.

#### **Other Safety Tips in the Garage:**

- Hot water heater water temperature is 120 degrees or lower.
- Containers of flammable and volatile liquids are tightly capped.
- Gasoline, paints, solvents or other products that give off vapors or fumes are stored away from ignition sources.
- The garage is adequately ventilated.

#### **Den, Living Room or Other Sitting Areas**

- Check all cords.
  - Lamp, extension and telephone cords placed out of the flow of traffic.
  - Electric cords out from beneath furniture and rugs or carpeting.
  - Tape used to attach cords to walls or floors where needed, no staples or nails.
  - All electrical cords are in good condition, not frayed or cracked.
  - If an extension cord is needed, it has sufficient amp or wattage rating as indicated by the ratings labeled on the cord and the appliance.
- Remove throw rugs, or use of double-sided tape or non-slip backing.
- Windows open easily from the inside.
- Windows have a lock.
- There are no exposed light bulbs.
- Light bulbs are the appropriate size and type for the lamp or fixture.

- All outlets and switches have cover plates so that no wiring is exposed.
- Door handles are lever action.
- Space heaters:
  - Heaters which come with a three-prong plug are used in a three-hole outlet or with a properly attached adapter.
  - Small stoves and heaters are placed where they can not be knocked over and away from furnishings and flammable materials, such as curtains or rugs.
- Wood-burning heaters:
  - Wood-burning stoves have been installed or checked by a qualified person according to local building codes.
  - Fireplaces and chimneys are clear from accumulations of leaves or other debris that could clog them.
  - Chimneys have been checked and cleaned by a registered or licensed professional.

### **Bedroom – Look at all your bedrooms.**

- An adequate-sized nightstand or small table is located beside the bed for telephone, glasses or other important items.
- A lamp is placed close to the bed where it is easy to reach.
- A nightlight is in use.
- A flashlight is placed near the bed.
- Bed is easy to get out of and into.
- Sheets and comforter are made with materials that are nonslippery such as wool or cotton.
- Clothes are arranged in closet so they are easy to reach.
- Clutter is off the floor.
- Plenty of room is left for you to walk around the bed.
- Do NOT smoke in bed.
  - Ashtrays, smoking materials and/or other fire sources (heaters, hot plates, teapots, etc.) are located away from beds or bedding
- Telephone:
  - A telephone is located close to the bed for emergencies.
  - Emergency numbers are posted on or near the telephone; for example, police, fire department, local poison control center, a neighbor's number.
  - At least one telephone is located where accessible from the floor.
- Smoke detectors are properly located, installed and working properly.
- There is a sturdy chair with arms where you can sit to dress.

#### **Other Bedroom Safety Tips:**

- Consider moving your bedroom to the first floor if not already located there.
- Have wall-to-wall low pile carpeting or a smooth-surfaced floor in the bedroom – no throw rugs.

## **Bathroom**

- Non-slip rubber mat or self-stick strips are on the floor of the tub or shower.
- A slip-resistant rug is placed adjacent to the bathtub for safe exit and entry.
- Some type of support for getting in and out of the tub and/or up from the toilet is available.
  - Grab bars, not towel rods, should be used. Grab bars should be vertical or horizontal, never diagonal.
- Nightlight is located in the bathroom.
- Glass shower enclosures replaced with non-shattering material.
- Light switch located near the entrance to the bathroom.
- Small electrical appliances such as hair dryers, shavers, curling irons, etc., are unplugged when not in use.
- Ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) installed in the bathroom outlet to protect against electric shock.

### **Other Bathroom Suggestions:**

- Tub chair
- Transfer bench
- Flexible shower arm
- Elevate the toilet seat (Molded plastic seat, adjustable seat, or raised toilet basin)
- Single lever mixing faucet.

## **Kitchen**

- Things most often used are on the lower shelves.
- A steady step stool with a bar to hold on to for reaching high cabinets is available.
- Throw rugs removed.
- Any liquids, grease or food spilled on the floor is cleaned up immediately.
- Nonskid floor wax is used.
- Range area:
  - Towels, curtains and other things that might catch fire are located away from the range.
  - Flammable and combustible items are stored away from range and oven.
  - No towels hanging on oven handles; change the location of the towel rack if needed.
  - Use kitchen ventilation systems while cooking, and make sure range exhausts are functioning properly.
- All extension cords and appliance cords are located away from the sink or range areas.
- Good, even lighting exists over the stove, sink and countertop work areas, especially where food is sliced or cut.

## **Hallways and Stairs**

- Steps are in good condition and free of clutter.
- Steps have non-skid strips.
- Carpeting on stairs is securely fastened and free of fraying or holes.

- Smoke detectors are in place.
- Hallways have a nightlight.
- Handrails are sturdy and on both sides of the stairway and in the hall if needed.
- Light switches are located at both the top and bottom of the stairs.
- Light switches are located at both ends of a hallway.
- Stairways and hallways are well lighted.
- Inside doors never swing open over the steps.

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