



Safety is our First Concern

The #1 risk for an independent living senior is a fall, which can have devastating effects. Falls account for 4 of every 5 injury-related hospitalizations by seniors and 20% of deaths related to an injury can be traced back to falls. According to the U.S. National Institute on Aging (NIA), each year more than 1.6 million seniors are treated in U.S. hospital emergency rooms for fall-related injuries caused by incidents such as slipping on a wet bathroom floor, loss of balance on stairs, or tripping on a rug.

These statistics are frightening. That's why making sure educating our aging is a high priority for healthcare professionals. The good news is that many accessibility home products are available today that can help you continue to live independently, more comfortably—and safely. Use our safety checklist below as a guide to help you eliminate safety hazards that may be in your home.

Safety Checklist

Exterior

- Low-maintenance exterior (vinyl, brick)
- Low-maintenance shrubs and plants
- Deck, patio or balcony surfaces are no more than ½ inch below interior floor level if made of wood

Overall Floor Plan

- Main living on a single story, including full bath
- No steps between rooms/areas on the same level
- 5-foot by 5-foot clear/turn space in living area, kitchen, a bedroom and a bathroom

Hallways

- Minimum of 36 inches wide, wider preferred
- Well lit / good lighting

Entry

- Accessible path of travel to the home
- At least one no-step entry with a cover
- Sensor light at exterior no-step entry focusing on the from-door lock
- There needs to be 32 inches of clear width, which requires a 36-inch door
- Non-slip flooring in foyer
- Entry door sidelight or high/low viewer; sidelight should provide both privacy and safety
- Doorbell in accessible location



Safety Checklist

Garage or Carport

- Covered carports and boarding spaces
- Wider than average carports to accommodate lifts on vans
- Door heights may need to be 9 feet to accommodate some raised roof vans
- 5-foot minimum access aisle between accessible van and car in garage
- If code requires floor to be several inches below entrance to house for fume protection, can slope entire floor from front to back to eliminate need for a ramp or step
- Ramp to doorway if needed
- A handrail if there are steps

Entrances

- Entrance roofs
- Exterior surfaces slip resistant (e.g., textured paint, aggregate concrete)
- Ramps with railings
- Railings on steps and porches
- Bench/ shelf directly inside and outside door (for packages)
- Doorbell light
- Lighting (additional fixtures and wattage, flood lights on motion sensors)

Doors and Doorways

- Entrance Doors
 - Thresholds as low and beveled as possible, flush preferable
 - Exterior maximum of ½ inch beveled
 - Interior maximum of ¼ inch
 - Lever handles
 - Single locking mechanism (i.e., dead bolt only)
 - Peephole (s)
 - Push/kick plates (on bottom / side of door)
 - Mail slot in door (instead of outside next to door)
 - Automatic closers
 - Good, because no effort to close door
 - Bad, because effort to open and keep door open
 - Storm doors removed or with additional handle
 - Sidelights next to door (to increase light, add security)
 - Garage door opener

Safety Checklist

Doors and Doorways (continued)

- Interior Doors
 - Pocket doors (requires wider wall construction)
 - Sliding/track protrude less into room (access to entire closet reduced by 2' – 3')
 - Bifolds protrude less into room (access to entire closet is reduced by 3" – 6")
 - Folding (accordion) protrude less into room (access to entire closet is reduced by 3" – 6")
 - Swinging single / double (western/kitchen style pushed from one or both sides)
 - There needs to be 32 inches of clear width, which requires a 36-inch door
 - Levered door hardware

- Interior Hardware
 - Lever handles
 - Additional loop handles added
 - "Swing-Away" hinges (to gain 1" – 1 ½")

- Doorways
 - Doors at least 32" – 36" wide
 - Doors eliminated if possible
 - Reversed door swings (e.g., swing out of bathroom instead of into)
 - Interior thresholds eliminated (to make floor surfaces level)
 - Thresholds only ¼" – ½" and beveled as much as possible

Windows

- Plenty of windows for natural light
- Lowered windows or taller windows with lower sill height
- Low maintenance exterior and interior finishes
- Easy to operate hardware
- Location: _____ 18" - 36" from floor
- Styles:
 - Casement
 - Awning
 - Sliding
- Handles:
 - Crank
 - Single-lever lock
 - Auxiliary handle

Safety Checklist

Walls, Ceilings and Floors

- Wall and Ceiling Finishes:
 - Light colored (to reflect light)
 - Flat, not glossy (to reduce glare)
- General:
 - Smooth transitions between floor types (e.g., carpet and wood)
 - Light, bright colors (to improve visibility)
 - Contrasting colors or borders (to define areas)
 - Contrast floor and upholstery colors
- Flooring:
 - Smooth, non-glare, slip-resistant surfaces, interior and exterior
 - Color/texture contrast to indicate change in surface levels
 - Carpet – short, level (not sculptured) , high density pile; static resistant
 - Vinyl flooring – skid resistant finish
 - Wood- non-glare satin, skid resistant finish
 - Ceramic tile- skid resistant

Stairways, Lifts and Elevators

- General:
 - Lighting increased
 - Step heights and depths consistent
 - Residential elevator or lift
 - Multi-story homes may provide either pre-framed shaft (i.e. stacked closets) for future elevator, or stairway width must be minimum of 4 feet to allow space for lift
- Stair coverings:
 - Treads non-slip with no pattern
 - Edges of steps have contrasting color
 - Increased visibility of stairs through contrast strip on top and bottom stairs, color contrast between treads and risers on stairs and use of lighting
- Railings:
 - Both sides contrast railing and wall colors, 1 ¼ inch diameter

Ramps

- Slope no greater than 1 inch rise for each 12 inches in length, adequate handrails
- 5-foot landing provided at entrance
- 2-inch curbs for safety

Safety Checklist

Storage Closets

- Doors:
 - Eliminate if possible
 - Easy open doors that do not obstruct access
 - Bifold or sliding/track
- Interior:
 - Closet organizers adjustable
 - Rods and shelving pull out
 - Upper and lower hanging rods
- Lighting in closets

Bathrooms

- Tub/Shower:
 - Shower curtain
 - Floor non-skid
 - Adjustable/ Hand-held shower, clipped to wall, 6-foot hose
 - Faucet single-lever
 - Tub/Shower controls offset from center
 - Shower controls scald-proof (to regulate temperature during water usage)
 - Tub/shower seat- fold down
 - At least one wheelchair maneuverable bath on main level with 60-inch turning radius or acceptable T-turn space and 36-inch by 36-inch by 48-inch clear space
 - If stand-up shower is used in main bath, it is curbless and minimum of 36 inches wide
 - Bathtub- lower for easier access
 - Shower stall with built-in antibacterial protection
 - Light in shower stall
- Sink Area:
 - Contrasting color edge border at countertops
 - Cabinet vanity eliminated (i nsulate drain/trap to prevent burns)
 - Faucet single-lever
 - Mirror with bottom 40 " from floor or tilted down
 - Shelving open
 - Other items (towel bars, soap/toothbrush holders) 48" from floor
 - Wall-hung sink with knee space and panel to protect user from pipes

Safety Checklist

Bathrooms (continued)

- Grab Bars:
 - Toilet – behind and to the side (33" – 36" or personal height)
 - Tub/shower- inside and outside
 - Contrasting color (to improve visibility)
 - Bracing in walls around tub, shower, shower seat and toilet for installation of grab bars to support 250 – 300 pounds
- Wall support and provision for adjustable and/or varied height counters and removable base cabinets
- Toilet 2 ½ inches higher than standard toilet (17 – 19 inches) or height-adjustable
- Design of the toilet paper holder allows rolls to be changed with one hand
- Slip-resistant flooring in bathroom and shower

Kitchens

- Cabinetry:
 - Shelving open (for easier access)
 - Glass doors (for easier visibility)
 - Lower wall cabinets (for easier access) - three inches lower than conventional
 - Shelving adjustable and pull-out
 - Racks and shelves on interior of doors
 - Lazy susans
 - Shelving on counters
 - Handles 1 ½" x 4" loop type
 - Handles contrasting colors
 - Pull-down shelving
- Countertops:
 - Mobile unit (s)
 - Wall support and provision for adjustable and/or varied height counters and removable base cabinets
 - Lower and higher in some areas
 - Depths decrease (from 24" to 19") in some areas
 - Corners rounded or 45 degree angled
 - Contrasting edge color to provide visual orientation to the workspace
 - Counter space for dish landing adjacent to or opposite all appliances
- Sinks:
 - Shallow
 - Faucets single-lever, extended hinge

Safety Checklist

Kitchens (continued)

- Appliances:
 - Refrigerator- side by side with ice and water dispensers
 - Range- from controls, touch controls, wall ovens with side-hinge doors
 - Microwave- touch controls, on or under counter
 - Dishwasher- touch controls, raised 6 " – 16 "
 - Garbage Disposal, Trash Compactor- touch controls, to eliminate trips to garbage
 - Washer and Dryer- front controls, touch controls, front loading, raised 12 to 15 inches above the floor
 - Electric cook top with level burners for safety in transferring between the burners, front controls and downdraft feature to pull heat away from user; light to indicate when surface is hot
 - Easy to read controls
 - Miscellaneous
 - 30-inch by 48-inch clear space at appliances or 60-inch diameter clear space for turns
 - Multi-level work areas to accommodate cooks of different heights
 - Open under-counter seated work areas
 - Placement of task lighting in appropriate work areas
 - Loop handles for easy grip and pull
 - Pull-out spray faucet; levered handles
 - In multi-story homes, laundry chute or laundry facility in master bedroom

Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning

- HVAC should be designed so filters are easily accessible
- Energy efficient units
- Windows that can be opened for cross ventilations, fresh air

Energy Efficient Features

- In-line framing with 2 by 6 studs spaced 24-in on center
- Air-barrier installation and sealing of duct work with mastic
- Reduced-size air conditioning units with gas furnaces
- Mechanical fresh air ventilation, installation of air returns in all bedrooms and use of carbon monoxide detectors
- Installation of energy efficient windows with Low-E glass

Reduced Maintenance/ Convenience Features

- Easy to clean surfaces
- Central vacuum
- Built-in pet feeding system
- Built-in recycling system