

Home Safety for the Elderly

Getting older is a fact of life. As we age, we also watch our loved ones become more mature, and we may become more concerned for their safety. Lack of mobility and other impairments can make day-to-day activities increasingly dangerous. The following are some general safety measures you may want to take to help keep your elderly relatives and friends safe:



General Safety Concerns

- Take care to ensure that doors are well-oiled and can be opened without force. Rugs should not block doorways, and the bottom edge of doors should be cut properly to open easily over carpeting.
- If an elderly occupant has difficulty turning doorknobs, they should have the standard round knobs replaced with lever handles.
- Make sure that heavier kitchen items, like large pots and pans, are stored on the lowest shelves and that most daily items can be accessed without the use of a stool or step ladder.

Preventing Slips and Falls

- › Although some elderly replace their stairs with ramps, it is important that the ramp have a secured, nonslip surface and that it is not too steep.
- › Linoleum, tile and wooden floors can be very slippery, but deep pile carpeting can make it difficult to use a cane, walker or wheelchair. An evenly fitted carpet with a tight pile is best.
- › Make sure that there is enough room to maneuver throughout the house. Keep walkways and floors clutter-free to reduce slips and falls.
- › Consider membership to a medical alerting service. For a reasonable monthly fee, your loved one will be fitted with an alert bracelet or necklace that they can use to call for help in an emergency.
- › Stairways should be solid and flat without loose footboards. Guardrails must be secured so that they can hold the entire weight of a falling adult.

Precautions For Bad Weather

- › Arthritic individuals are extremely sensitive to dampness and cold temperatures. Make sure their homes are properly insulated and that doors and windows are sealed tightly. If space heaters are used, make sure that all precautionary guidelines are followed.
- › Be certain that there is one corded phone in the home. When the electricity goes out, a cordless phone may not work.
- › Since elderly individuals may have trouble maneuvering themselves in bad weather, it is a good idea to keep some non-perishable foods on hand, especially if the person is diabetic.

For more information on home safety for the elderly...

National Safety Council:

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