



# Staying Independent

## A Home Safety Checklist



### DID YOU KNOW?

*Use this checklist to make your home a safer place to live.*

- ✓ Falls are predictable and can be prevented.
- ✓ Most falls happen in and around the home.
- ✓ Concern about falling and inactivity can lead to the loss of independence.
- ✓ 40% of all nursing home admissions occur as a result of a fall.

# Using Your Home Safety Checklist



Your home, furnishings and lifestyle  
all affect your risk of falling.

Using this checklist, take your time and go through each room including the basement, garage, porch, and walkways.

Think about having a family member or friend help you. Use the form on the back page to record the improvements that are needed and create a plan to make these changes.

***It's time to take control of your independence!***

# Outside Your Home

Are the walkways, ramps, pathways, and stairways leading to your home:	Yes	No
Fitted with handrails on one or both sides?		
In good repair, free from cracks, holes, and clutter?		
Well lit?		
Non-slip surfaces?		

Garage	Yes	No
Is the garage door easy to open and close?		
When your car is in the garage, can you get in and out of it easily?		
Is the garage free from clutter, debris, and other hazards?		
Is there enough lighting?		

## Tips

- ✓ Keep all walkways, ramps, and stairs free of clutter, wet leaves, snow and ice. Keep a mixture of sand and salt handy for icy areas.
- ✓ Always wear shoes that have good treads.
- ✓ If you use a cane, fit it with an “ice pick” so it won’t slip on icy surfaces.
- ✓ Check out [www.ratemytreads.com](http://www.ratemytreads.com) to see a list of recommended footwear.

# Your Entrance

	Yes	No
Do you have good lighting outside all entrances?		
Are the eavestroughs over the entrances in good repair and clear of debris?		
Do the doors have handles that make them easy to open and close?		
Is there a bench or shelf to put packages on while you open the door?		
Is the doorway wide enough for easy use with a walker, cane, or shopping buggy?		
Does the front mat stay firmly in position and is it in good condition?		
Are porch and balcony floors in good shape and railings secure?		
Are all exits and hallways clear of boxes, shoes, and other clutter?		

## Tips

- ✓ Keep roof and eavestroughs over doorways free from snow and ice to prevent water from dripping, which will turn into ice or slippery patches.
- ✓ Consider putting up motion detector lights to light up the path to your door.

# Your Stairs

	Yes	No
Are all stairs in good repair with no protruding nails or uneven surfaces?		
Are stair steps consistent in height and depth?		
Do steps have a secured non-slip surface and clearly marked edges?		
Are there handrails on both sides of the stairway and do they go beyond the top and bottom step?		
Are the handrails mounted firmly and far enough away from the wall to allow for a solid grip?		
Are there light switches at both the top and bottom of each flight of stairs?		
Are all stairways well-lit and free from shoes, packages, and other obstacles?		

## Tips

- ✔ Avoid carrying large or heavy items when using the stairs.
- ✔ Keep one hand free to use the handrail.
- ✔ Always take extra care when using stairs, step stools or ladders.
- ✔ Provide a night light in the stair area.
- ✔ Ideal stair height should be no more than 18 cm (7 in.) and stair depth no less than 28 cm (11 in.).

# Your Floors

	Yes	No
Do all doorways have a flush threshold?		
Are area rugs and runners fastened to the floor?		
Do they have a slip-resistant backing?		
Is flooring in good repair and floor vents secure?		
Are floor surfaces non-slip, especially wet areas such as bathroom, kitchen, laundry and entrances?		
Do you use non-skid wax and floor cleaners?		

## Tips

- ✓ Highly waxed floors can be very slippery and cause you to fall.
- ✓ Keep bathroom, kitchen, laundry, and entrances dry to avoid slips.
- ✓ Scatter rugs are dangerous. Attach area rugs and runners with double-sided carpet tape.
- ✓ Carpets with a low, tight pile are safest.

# Your Living Space

	Yes	No
Is there a light switch for turning on a light before entering a room?		
Is the furniture in your living areas arranged so you can move easily without bumping into objects?		
Are your travel paths clear of telephone and electrical cords?		
Are the windows easy to reach and to open, close and lock?		

## Tips

- ✔ Consider installing motion sensor switches for lights.
- ✔ Add electrical outlets and phone jacks to avoid extension cords.
- ✔ A good stable chair with arm rests makes it easier to get up and sit down.
- ✔ To make it easier to get in and out of chairs, consider putting wooden blocks under furniture or use extra foam cushions to raise the seat height.

# Pets

	Yes	No
Do you have any pets in your home?		
Are your travel paths clear of your pet's bed and their toys?		

## Tips

- ✓ Check where your pet is when you move around your home.
- ✓ To know where your pet is, put something on their collar that makes noise, like a bell.
- ✓ Pick up your pet's toys when not in use. Choose brightly coloured toys that are easy to see.
- ✓ Consider using a baby gate to limit your pet's access to the kitchen when you're working in it.
- ✓ When walking your pet, keep the leash short to reduce the risk of tripping on it.





# Your Kitchen

	Yes	No
Can you reach items you use most often without having to climb or strain to reach them?		
Do you have a step stool (with a safety rail) for reaching high places?		
Are heavy items in the lower cupboards and light items in the higher cupboards?		
Are the electrical outlets easy to reach without using extension cords?		
Can you turn the sink taps easily with one hand?		

## Tips

- ✓ Consider using a reacher vs. step stool when appropriate.
- ✓ Avoid heavy lifting by resting large empty pots on the cooking surface and filling them using a cup.
- ✓ Use a slotted spoon, metal colander or wire basket to remove food from hot water rather than lifting the pot to drain.
- ✓ Keep your emergency numbers in an easy-to-reach area, such as by the telephone or on the fridge.

# Fire Safety

	Yes	No
If you smoke, are cigarettes and ashes extinguished in an ashtray or metal container with water or sand?		
Are smoke detectors and carbon monoxide alarms installed and working?		
Is there a fire extinguisher in your home?		

## Tips

- ✓ Smoke outside if you can. Never smoke in bed or near medical oxygen.
- ✓ Make sure that you have a smoke detector and a carbon monoxide alarm on every floor of your home, especially near sleeping areas.
- ✓ Test the alarms once a month to make sure the battery is working and that you can hear the alarm from your bedroom.
- ✓ Change the batteries at least once a year or whenever the alarm “chirps” to tell you that the battery power is low.
- ✓ Make a fire escape plan with at least 2 exit ways.

# Your Bathroom

	Yes	No
Does your bathtub and shower have a non-slip mat or slip resistant surface?		
Is there good lighting in the bathroom, including a night light?		
Do you have a grab bar with a textured hand surface in your bathtub and shower? (Towel bars are NOT strong enough to hold your weight.)		
Is it easy to reach and turn the taps on your sink, shower, and bathtub?		
Does your bathroom floor mat have a slip-resistant backing?		

## Tips

- ✓ By placing towel racks close to the sink and tub you are less likely to drip water on the floor.
- ✓ A bath seat and an adjustable shower head are great options for stability and safety when bathing.
- ✓ A raised toilet seat and grab bars make it easier to reach the toilet.
- ✓ Use a long-handled tub scrubber or mop when cleaning the tub or shower walls to avoid bending and reaching.
- ✓ Test the temperature of the water before getting into the shower or bath.

# Your Bedroom

	Yes	No
Is there a switch to turn lights on before entering your bedroom?		
Is there a lamp or light switch within easy reach of your bed?		
Is there a telephone within easy reach of your bed?		
Is there a clear path from the bed to the bathroom?		
Is there lots of space to move around the room freely?		
Is there a working flashlight within easy reach of the bed?		
Are all area rugs, mats and runners firmly secured to the floor or do they have slip-resistant backing?		

## Tips

- ✓ Keep your emergency numbers by the telephone or on the fridge.
- ✓ Sit rather than stand to complete dressing activities.
- ✓ Get light-sensitive night lights that brighten when it gets dark in a room or hallway.
- ✓ Consider a long-handled shoehorn or sock aid for putting on socks and shoes.
- ✓ Keep items you use often in easy reach in closets and storage areas.

# Your Basement

	Yes	No
Is there plenty of light in the basement?		
Is your basement floor free from clutter?		
Are the edges of each stair clearly marked with a colour that stands out?		
Can you move through the room without bumping into things?		
Are the stairs well lit, in good repair and do they have a non-slip surface?		
Is there a handrail or banister on both sides of the stairway and do they go beyond the top and bottom step?		
Are there light switches at both the top and bottom of each flight of stairs?		

## Tips

- ✓ Consider putting a phone in the basement or carry a portable in your pocket.
- ✓ Have a flashlight handy in case of power failure.
- ✓ Be sure you know how to shut off the hydro, gas, and water service.

# Your Medicine Cabinet

	Yes	No
Do you know why you take each of your medications?		
Do you know what side effects your medications may cause? Some can increase your chance of falling!		
Do you know when and how to take each of your medications?		
Are your medications in clearly labelled containers in a cool dry place, away from the heat and humidity of the bath or shower?		
Do you keep an updated medication record, including any herbal supplements and over the counter medications?		
Do you have a medication review with your pharmacist at least yearly?		
Do you store medications in a safe place, out of sight, and out of reach of children?		

## Tips

- ✔ Take old medications to your pharmacy or a hazardous waste disposal centre. Do not put them in the garbage or down the drain or toilet.
- ✔ Only use medication that has been prescribed for you. Sharing medication can be dangerous and sometimes fatal.
- ✔ If you forget to take your medication, ask your pharmacist to put them in blister packs.
- ✔ Talk to your doctor or pharmacist. They are there to answer your questions.

# Your Safe Home Summary

*Did you check any "NO" boxes?*

Improvements needed	Work to be done	Help needed	Done
Outside			
Entrance			
Stairs			
Floors			
Living space			
Pets			
Kitchen			
Fire safety			
Bathroom			
Bedroom			
Basement			
Medicine cabinet			



For more information contact

# **Your local public health unit.**

Or speak with your doctor, nurse practitioner, pharmacist, home and community care, or medical supply dealer.

[www.stayonyourfeet.ca](http://www.stayonyourfeet.ca)

This resource was developed by Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit.  
Adapted by the Porcupine Health Unit with permission of the authors.