

# Home Safety for Seniors: Safety Solutions for Independent Seniors



As a senior citizen, you have a variety of housing options available to meet your needs. Active and independent older adults sometimes choose to live in adult retirement communities that provide recreational and social activities, while seniors who might need some extra help at home may benefit from assisted living facilities. As your needs change, living arrangements that provide more assistance, such as an adult family home, residential health care facility, or nursing home, may also be available.

However, more adults are choosing to remain in their own homes or apartments for as long as possible. Seniors are becoming more independent and are living on their own longer than ever before. While this is great news, it is also important that seniors and their families ensure that their homes are safe. By following some simple tips, you can ensure that your home is safe and enjoy your independence for as long as possible.

## In the Kitchen



The kitchen is one of the most dangerous rooms in a home, and maintaining a safe space can be especially important for seniors. Limited dexterity and range of motion can make it hard to use kitchen tools and appliances, and water on the floor can increase the risk of slips and falls. Following a few simple tips can make your kitchen a safer space:

- Rearrange cabinets so that reaching and bending are limited.
- Replace knobs on cabinet drawers with handles for easier access.
- Use a wire rack on the counter for storing dishes to reduce back strain caused by reaching.
- Install pullout shelves in cabinets for easier access to items.
- Use a refrigerator that has a lower freezer whenever possible.
- Elevate the front of the refrigerator so that the door will swing closed on its own.
- Install a swivel plate into corner cabinets.
- Request that your gas company modifies your stove so that the gas odor is strong enough to be noticeable if your pilot light goes out.
- Use a microwave over the oven whenever possible, except if you have a pacemaker.
- Use a faucet with one lever that can effectively balance water temperature.
- Ensure that the temperature on your water heater is set at 120 degrees.
- Choose an electric teakettle over a stovetop option, and purchase a model with an automatic shutoff feature.
- Check the expiration dates on your food often, and make sure that food in your fridge or pantry is rotated regularly.

## In the Bedroom



When planning for a better home safety strategy, you should also focus on bedroom safety as part of your plan. By implementing a few tips, you can get a good night's sleep knowing that your bedroom is safe:

- Install bed railings to make it easier to get into and out of bed.
- Make sure a smoke detector is installed near the bedroom.
- Keep a flashlight near your bed so that it can be accessed easily.
- Install lights that will turn on automatically when someone is up out of bed. This can help to reduce falls.
- Keep a sturdy chair in your bedroom so that you can sit down to dress.
- Keep the area around your bed free of clutter, and never use throw rugs.
- Invest in a **medical alert device** that is comfortable enough to wear while you are asleep.

## In the Bathroom



The bathroom can be an especially dangerous room for senior citizens. Mobility issues can make it difficult to get into and out of the bathtub, and the medications that you take may cause problems like hypotension and dizziness that could lead to falls. Take precautions to ensure that your bathroom is safe:

- Elevate toilet seats to make getting up and down as easy as possible.
- Install grab bars next to the toilet, shower, and tub to aid in getting up and down.
- Replace knobs on your faucet with lever handles so that they are easier to turn. If you do have knobs, make sure the hot and cold faucets are labeled clearly.
- Make sure that all outlets are installed at a level that is easily accessible, but away from the water.
- Use a nightlight or other lighting source so that the bathroom is adequately lit at night.
- Remove door locks from your bathroom door. In the event that you fall and use your senior alert device, a locked door may make it difficult for help to get to you.
- Consider redesigning your bathroom so that it contains a walk-in tub or shower. Built-in seating and a door rather than a shower curtain are also beneficial.
- Install non-skid strips onto the shower floor or tub to prevent slips and to improve traction.
- Have permanent rough coating installed into the bottom of your tub or shower surface.

## In the Living Room



The living room is likely the room of the house in which you will spend the most time. It is here that you will watch TV, relax, and meet with friends and family who come to visit. Therefore, having a safe living room is essential for you to feel comfortable in your own home, so consider a few safety upgrades to this area:

- Consider installing carpeting if you have hardwood floors, as this can provide better traction and can prevent slips and trips.
- Remove items from the floor that are purely decorative, such as footstools, plants, magazine racks, or baskets.
- Replace any chairs that have wheels with regular seating options.
- Put non-slip padding under area rugs, or remove these rugs from the room altogether. Tack carpeting down, especially if your living room has vinyl or ceramic floor tiles, as these surfaces can be quite slippery.
- If you have difficulty getting on and off furniture, have sturdy risers placed underneath the legs so that they are at a more convenient height.
- Ensure that all power cords and strips to your electronic devices and lighting are stored out of the way so that they are not a tripping hazard.
- Keep your medical alert device in an area that is easily accessible, as these devices are crucial in senior fall detection and dispatching help promptly.

## In Other Areas



While there are specific safety measures that you can employ in certain rooms of your house, there are also strategies that you can take for other areas that can benefit your safety:

- Replace the doorknob to your front door and any interior doors with a lever handle.
- Make sure that flashlights are easily accessible from anywhere in your home.
- Prevent burns and scalding by ensuring that your water heater is set to 120 degrees.
- Use dimmer switches and halogen lamps in order to install track lighting in each room of your home.
- Wear shoes that fit properly and have a low heel in order to assist with walking.
- Have sturdy railings available at any stairs located throughout your house, and ensure staircases are properly lit.
- Use a cane or walker in order to assist you with your mobility throughout your home.
- Program your home and cellular phones so that 911 and other emergency numbers require 1-touch dialing.
- Keep a smoke detector and fire extinguisher on every floor so that you can access them easily.
- Keep important items at waist level, and avoid standing on chairs or ladders to get items that placed higher on shelves.

If you are committed to keeping yourself safe, there are a variety of other resources that may be of interest to you:

- [Home and Recreational Safety](#). Adults can live safe, healthy, and independent lives regardless of their age.
- [Winter Safety Tips for Seniors](#). Cold weather is particularly dangerous for older adults, so it is important to know how to stay safe at home during the winter.
- [Fraud and Identify Theft Resources](#). Senior citizens who live at home are often targets for crimes related to fraud and identity theft.

- [Storm and Severe Weather Safety](#). A storm or severe weather can affect anyone, regardless of age, but senior citizens need to take special precautions to be prepared.
- [Medication Safety](#). Taking certain medications can make you more likely to have an accident or injury at home.

While there are numerous living arrangements available for senior citizens, many are choosing to stay in their own homes. While this is obviously one of the most desirable arrangements, it can only work if you and your family are committed to making sure that your home is safe. There are a variety of potentially dangerous situations and hazards in each room of your house, so correcting these issues before they lead to an accident or injury is crucial to stay safe at home. Fortunately, with a proper home safety plan in place and a reliable medical alert system, seniors can enjoy the independence of living in their own homes for as long as possible.