

# FALLS checklist

Use this checklist  to help  
prevent falling in  
your home.



# Steps and Stairs

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Look at the stairs you use both inside and outside the home.

**Are there papers, shoes, books or other objects on the stairs?**

Pick up things on the stairs. Always keep objects off the stairs as you could fall over them.

Yes

No

**Are some steps broken or uneven?**

Ask someone to repair loose or uneven steps.

**Is your lighting adequate to let you see clearly on the stairs?**

Use additional lighting, such as a touch lamp or a table lamp. A night light can also be used to guide you to the light switch. Night lights are low-energy lights that plug into a mains socket and emit a low-level light. It is recommended that you use the dusk-to-dawn type that switches on automatically.

**Has the stairway light bulb burned out?**

Have a friend or family member change the light bulb.

**Do you have well-fitting slippers/shoes?**

Avoid wearing shoes or slippers that are loose or have no backs. Wearing well-fitted shoes at all times is preferable.



**Is the carpet on the stairs loose or torn?**

Ask someone to make sure that the carpet is firmly attached to every step, or remove the carpet and attach non-slip rubber treads to the stairs.

 

**Are the stair rails loose or broken?**

Ask someone to refit loose stair rails or put in new ones.

 

**Is there a stair rail on only one side of the stairs?**

Make sure stair rails are on both sides of the stairs and are as long as the stairs.

 

**Do you have a front door mat?**

If so, make sure it is non-slip.

 

**If using a ladder, is it at a safe angle and anchored at its base?**

Never use a ladder when you are on your own, it is far safer to have someone with you who can hold the ladder steady. Alternatively the safest option is to ask someone to help you by using the ladder themselves.

# Living Room

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Look at your living room.

## **Is your chair stable?**

If your chair is rocky or wobbly it would be best to replace it. Your feet should touch the ground when sitting on it. Rocking chairs with wheels and swivel chairs should be avoided as they don't provide a stable base to push up from and you can easily miss them when sitting down.

Yes

No

## **Is your room full of furniture?**

De-clutter – Too many items of furniture in the room could easily become a hazard and greatly increases the chance for trips/falls. Instead keep the room organized by removing items that are not needed on a daily basis. There should be enough space to walk around the room without having to squeeze past or walk around furniture. Ask someone to move the furniture so that your path is clear and you have enough space to move around. This is particularly important if you have a walking aid as your walking aid could easily catch on furniture or clutter causing you to fall.

## **Do you have low tables?**

Low coffee tables can be difficult to walk around, especially if you have a walking aid, as it can increase your risk of tripping or losing your balance. They can pose a serious trip/fall hazard if you bump into them accidentally when you're not paying attention or if you have problems with your vision. Use furniture that has rounded corners or edges and



try to avoid glass topped coffee table as glass furniture if broken in a fall can cause serious injuries.

**Is your room adequately heated?**

Cold rooms can cause your muscles to stiffen which can lead to a fall when you stand up or try to walk after you have been sitting for a while. Check windows are properly insulated to keep you warm during winter months. Warm your legs before standing up by raising and lowering your heels 10 times and try to avoid sitting for more than an hour at a time.

 

**Do you have a pouffe or footstool?**

These are best to be avoided as they are a trip hazard. If you need to elevate your legs a recliner chair or lying on the sofa is a safer option.

 

**Do you have rugs on the floor, or are your carpets fraying or rucked-up?**

Remove the rugs or use double-sided tape or a non-slip backing to fix them down so that they won't slip. Remove fraying carpets where possible.

 

**Do you have casters under chairs which make them likely to slide as you get up?**

Casters make furniture easier to move but can cause you to slide back just as you are getting up. Either remove the casters or fit cup shaped carpet savers on the casters.

# Kitchen



Look at your kitchen and eating area.

**Are things that you often use located on high shelves?**

Rearrange items in your cupboards and cabinets. Keep things you often use on the lower shelves. Do not stand on stools, steps or chairs.

| Yes                      | No                       |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Are any of your appliances leaking?**

Leakage from appliances such as washing machines, dish washers, freezers etc can cause you to slip.

|                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|

**Do you have back door mats?**

If so, make sure your mats are all non-slip.

|                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|

**Is there good lighting over work areas?**

Ask someone to install adequate lighting.

|                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|

**Do you need to de-clutter your kitchen?**

Remove any unused or unwanted items from the floor and work surfaces. The more clutter you have in the kitchen, the greater the risk of tripping over something, falling, and sustaining injuries.

|                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|

**Are spillages cleaned up quickly?**

Ensure spilled liquids and sticky or greasy foods on the kitchen floor are cleaned immediately to avoid accidents. Lightweight cordless vacuum cleaners prevent tripping on leads.

|                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|

# Bedroom

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Look at all your bedrooms.

## **Is the bedside light hard to reach?**

Place a lamp on a bedside table near to the bed where it's easy to reach; a touch lamp can be very useful.

Yes

No

## **Is the path from your bed to the bathroom dark?**

Always turn on the light if you get up at night. Put in a nightlight so that you can see where your light switches are. (It is recommended that you use the dusk-to-dawn type that switches on automatically.)

## **Is your nightwear too long or trailing?**

If so, replace or adjust the length of your nightwear. Be aware that long nightwear can be a trip hazard.

## **Do you have sheets, bed covers or throws trailing on the floor?**

Use fitted sheets and duvet covers where possible. It is easy to trip on trailing bed clothes and cushions. Take throws and cushions off the bed at night and put in a safe place.

## **Is there a telephone next to your bed?**

It is useful to have a telephone next to your bed in your bedroom. If you have a pendant alarm, make sure it is within reach when you are in bed.

# Bathroom

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Look at your bathroom.

**Do you have a non-slip rubber mat in the bath or shower?**

Yes

No

Always ensure that you have a non-slip mat or self-stick strips on the floor of the bath or shower.

**Do you have well-fitting slippers?**

Avoid wearing shoes or slippers that are loose or have no backs. Wearing well fitted shoes at all times is preferable.

**Is there a risk of falling on wet vinyl or tiled flooring?**

Non-slip mats, a fitted carpet or carpet tiles should be used. Wet floor areas should be mopped as soon as possible.

**Do you find it hard to step into the bath or shower?**

Could you have the bath or step-in shower replaced with a wet room or ask someone to fix grab rails at the shower door, inside the shower or beside the bath.

**Do you find it hard to get up from the toilet unaided? Or do you pull on the radiator or towel rail to help you stand up?**

Ask someone to fit a grab rail beside the toilet?



# Pets

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Yes

No

**Are there pet toys, food bowls etc. on the floor where they could cause you to trip?**

Keep pet items like toys and food/water bowls out of paths and walk ways to avoid tripping over them.

**Do you have a small or large lively pet?**

For cats and smaller dogs that may run under your feet and cause you to trip, place a bell on the pet collar to let you know when your pet is nearby.

Larger dogs may jump to greet you or your guests which may increase the risk of falls.

**Do you walk your pets outdoors?**

Walk with your pet in familiar, well-lit areas with level ground. It may be best to walk in areas away from other dogs in case it suddenly pulls you to chase another dog and knocks you over. Make sure you have a firm grip of the lead with your hand through the loop for more control. Consider dog-walking service if appropriate.

**How accessible are food bowls for your pets?**

Long handled food/water bowls can be purchased to minimise bending.

# Garden



Have a look around.

## **Are your paths clear of leaves and overgrowing plants?**

Keeping the garden tidy and free of obstacles will make it a lot safer. Keep your front and back door areas clear from plants and ornaments.

Yes

No

## **Are your paving stones free from moss & algae?**

Moss and algae becomes slippery when wet. They thrive in moist, shady areas, so prevent them from growing by pruning overhanging plants and branches to improve the light and air circulation. You can buy products that you apply and rinse off to remove algae, or ask someone to remove it with a pressure washer.

## **Do you go out in icy weather? If so:**

Spread salt or salty sand on your steps if you need to go outside.

## **Do you have a high step to get in and out of the property?**

Ask someone to fix an additional step where possible and a grab rail to the outside of the property.

## **Do you have any uneven or broken paving slabs/steps?**

Ask someone to straighten them up or replace them for you.

# Other Safety Tips

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- Keep emergency numbers in large print near each phone.
- Put a phone near the floor in case you fall and can't get up, or carry a mobile phone with you at all times. Basic-level mobile phones can be purchased relatively cheaply and can be obtained from many retailers or large supermarkets.
- Think about carrying an alarm device (that can be worn round the neck) that when pressed will notify someone that you have had a fall and can't get up.
- Keep a torch by your bed and, if possible, one on each floor of your property to reduce the risk of falling if a power cut occurs.
- Ask someone to paint a contrasting colour on the top edge of all steps so you can see the stairs better. For example, use a light-coloured paint on dark wood.
- Alternatively, ask someone to add strips of non-slip masking tape, making sure that it stays in good condition and doesn't become a trip hazard in itself.
- Exercise regularly to improve your balance and make your legs stronger. This also helps you feel better and more confident.

# FALLS checklist

Contact your GP  
if you have a fall,  
especially if you  
hurt yourself.

Useful Contact

AGE NI 9023 3341

