

# Caregiver Assistance News

“CARING FOR YOU ... CARING FOR OTHERS”

## Preparing the Home—Safety First

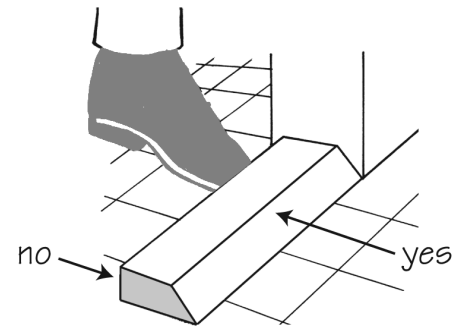
Preparing your home for a senior or a disabled adult is about how to make the home as comfortable and safe as possible. It can be much the same as childproofing your home for a young child who can get hurt. Accidents can happen, but with a little planning they can be prevented. Each room must be gone through, reorganized if needed and made as accident proof as possible. Ask a relative, friend or a home care agency to help see any safety hazards you may have overlooked.

### General Safety Tips

Keep the furniture in the same familiar place and make sure it will not move if leaned on. Take out unnecessary furniture and leave space for a walker or wheelchair to get around. Contrasting colors play a big part in seeing well. As much as possible, the color of furniture, toilet seats, counters, etc., should be different from the floor color.

- ☐ Use chairs with long armrests to help the person get up and down.
- ☐ Add cushioning to sharp corners.
- ☐ Use low-pile carpet in solid colors.
- ☐ **Don't leave anything on the floor that might cause tripping, especially on stairs.**
- ☐ Install strong railings.
- ☐ Ensure good lighting—inside and out.
- ☐ Put night-lights in the rooms used by the person in your care.

- ☐ Have an emergency fire escape plan; keep fire escape routes clear; keep a fire extinguisher in the kitchen; and put up smoke alarms.



Thresholds should be trip resistant. If possible, they should be beveled and not abrupt.

### The Kitchen

The kitchen can be filled with booby traps for the unwary. Dangers include cuts from sharp knives, burns and scalds, and injuries from reaching and bending. To keep handicapped or elderly people who enjoy helping in the kitchen safe, follow the tips below.

#### Kitchen Safety Tips

- Use an electric tea kettle.
- Install microwave ovens at countertop height, not over-head, to reduce the chance of spills.
- Set the water-heater temperature below 120°F.
- Use a single-lever faucet that can balance water temperature.
- Provide an area away from the knife drawer and the stove where the person in your care can help prepare food.

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- Use a microwave oven whenever possible (but not if a person with a pacemaker is present).
- Ask the gas company to modify your stove to provide a gas odor that is strong enough to alert you if the pilot light goes out.
- If possible, have the range controls on the front of the stove.
- Provide a step stool, never a chair, to reach high shelves.

### ***Kitchen Safety, Comfort and Convenience***

- Use adjustable-height chairs with locking casters.
- Install a Lazy Susan® (swivel plate) in corner cabinets.
- Set up cabinets to reduce bending and reaching.
- Put in a storage wall, rather than upper cabinets.
- For easy access, replace drawer knobs with handles.
- Place a wire rack on the counter to reduce back strain from reaching for dishes.
- Adapt one counter for wheelchair access.
- Remove doors under the sink to allow for wheelchair access; cover exposed pipes.
- Create different counter heights by putting in folding or pull-out surfaces.
- If bending is difficult, consider a wall oven.
- Install pullout shelves in cabinets.
- If possible, use a fridge that has the freezer on the bottom.
- Prop the front of the fridge so that the door closes by itself. (If needed, reverse the way the door swings.)



**A cutting board placed over a drawer provides an easy-to-reach surface for a person in a wheelchair.**

### **Note - Bedroom Safety**

Use a monitor to listen to activity in the room, and—

- ➔ keep a cell phone, flashlight and whistle near the person's bed
- ➔ provide a sturdy chair or table next to the bed for help getting in and out of bed
- ➔ make sure the bed is stable and doesn't move.

## Taking Care of Yourself— Happy Feet Prevent Falls

Every year one in three Americans will take a tumble, and risk increases with age.

Healthy feet prevent falls. As we age, the foot's muscle tissue thins, blood circulation decreases, nerves become less sensitive and the cushioning tissues on the soles becomes less springy. Arches start to fall; the foot flattens and spreads.

Older toes tend to curl because of weak muscles. Corns bunions and tender spots are frequent. Because diabetes damages the foot's nerves, diabetics are at particular risk of foot problems.

Sore feet are a major reason for unsteady gait and poor balance, and most elderly people who fell reported that they had chronically aching feet.

Footwear is the single most important factor in foot health. Getting the right size is vital. A good orthopedic shoe specialist and the trained staff at sporting goods stores can help in getting good shoes for older feet.

Source: Harvard Health Letter



## Inspiration

*Eliminating clutter makes room for your true treasures.*

## Live Life Laughing!

It is a lot of pressure on me not to pressure them.



## Memory Care - Avoid Falls

Falls are the leading cause of injury-related deaths among people 65 and older. Protect the person in your care by-

- exercising to preserve muscle strength and flexibility
- being extra careful when the person takes medications that cause dizziness or sleepiness
- going to the eye doctor once a year for check-ups

## Caregiving in The Comfort of Home®

### Our Purpose

To provide caregivers with critical information enabling them to do their job with confidence, pride, and competence.

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## SAFETY TIPS—Outdoor Areas for Alzheimer's Safety

Safe outdoor areas are important, especially for those who are confused and are mobile. Safety features should include—

- ramps for access on ground that is not level or even
- a deck with a sturdy railing
- outside doors locked or alarmed
- a key hidden outside
- enough light to see walkway hazards at night
- nonslip step surfaces in good repair
- stair handrails fastened to their fittings
- step edges marked with reflective paint
- a hedge or fence around the yard and dangerous areas like pools or streams

In addition, unplug or remove power tools.

NEXT ISSUE... UNDERSTANDING ALZHEIMER'S BEHAVIOR THE ABC WAY

# Caregiver Assistance News

“ C A R I N G   F O R   Y O U ... C A R I N G   F O R   O T H E R S ”

## Q U I C K   Q U I Z

Falls, sprains, strains, and burns are a common source of injuries for older adults. In planning for comfort and safety at home, think ahead. Answer True or False to the questions below.

1. If a medication causes dizziness or sleepiness, be *extra* careful when the person in your care is walking.  
T F
2. If you are planning to take care of an elderly or disabled person at home, prepare the house with safety in mind.  
T F
3. Have an emergency fire escape plan and keep the route clear.  
T F
4. Furniture should be kept in the same familiar place and be sturdy so as not to move when leaned on.  
T F
5. Outside doors do *not* need to be locked or alarmed for the safety of people who are confused and are mobile.  
T F
6. To prevent falls, provide a sturdy chair or table next to the bed for help getting in and out of bed.  
T F
7. Sore feet are a major reason for unsteady gait and poor balance, and most elderly people who fell reported that they had chronically aching feet.  
T F
8. To prevent scalding, set the hot water thermostat below 120° F.  
T F
9. Low-pile carpets in solid colors are *not* the safest for an elderly person.  
T F
10. Help avoid falls by picking up clutter from the floor, especially on the stairs.  
T F

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_