



BENZIE
SENIOR RESOURCES

Be connected. Be supported. Be home.



HOME SAFETY

How To Protect Yourself At Home

Your Contact & Location Information

Your Name: _____

Your Address: _____

Your Phone #: _____

Fire Extinguisher's Location: _____

After Evacuation Meeting Point: _____

Emergency & Important Contact Numbers

FOR ALL LIFE-THREATENING EMERGENCIES CALL 911

Poison Control: Michigan Poison Center – 1-800-222-1222

Adult Protective Services: Call 24 Hours a Day – 1-855-444-3911

Primary Physician: _____

Pharmacy: _____

Your Local Emergency Contact Person: _____

Your Out-of-Area Contact Person: _____

How to Protect Yourself at Home

As your health and safety is of utmost importance to us, we are providing you with a *Home Safety Checklist* to help you identify areas in your home which may be hazardous for you. If you or a family member are not able to complete this checklist, we will be happy to assist you. If red-flag issues are identified, it will be comforting for you to know that many of them can be modified with minor adjustments, thereby considerably reducing your safety risks, especially your risk of falling.

Physical Objects

Kitchen

- ◆ Store food, dishes, and cooking equipment within easy reach. Place the most frequently used items between eye and knee level.
- ◆ Use a foot ladder with a handle to reach upper cabinets. Don't stand on chairs or boxes.
- ◆ Keep cabinet doors and drawers closed.
- ◆ Keep dishcloths, dishtowels, oven mitts and other flammable items away from stove burners and flames.
- ◆ Ensure the ON" buttons work on all appliances.
- ◆ Ensure stove controls are accessible and easy to use.
- ◆ Keep workspace near the cooking area uncluttered.
- ◆ Remove throw rugs.
- ◆ Use non-skid floor wax.
- ◆ Clean up any liquids, grease, or food spilled on the floor immediately.

Living Areas

- ◆ Ensure stairs, and hallways are brightly lit.
- ◆ Put nightlights in the hallways.
- ◆ Make light switches accessible so they can be turned on and off:
 - without having to walk across a dark room
 - at the top and bottom of each stairway.
- ◆ Arrange furniture so it doesn't block pathways in halls and rooms.
- ◆ Use sofas & chairs that:
 - are high and firm enough to sit and stand easily.
 - have arm rests strong enough for getting in and out.
- ◆ Remove newspapers and all clutter from pathways and rooms.
- ◆ Secure loose area rugs with double-faced tape or tacks. Or use area rugs with slip-resistant backing.
- ◆ Keep a list of emergency telephone numbers by the telephone.
- ◆ Keep electric, appliance and telephone cords out of walkways and do not place cords under a rug.
- ◆ Locate heaters at least 12-inches away from furniture and drapes.
- ◆ Keep low-rise coffee tables, magazine racks, footrests, and plants out of the path of traffic.

- ◆ Repair loose, wooden floorboards right away.
- ◆ Remove door sills higher than a ½- inch.

Bathroom

- ◆ Replace glass shower enclosures with non-shattering material.
- ◆ Place a non-skid mat in the bathtub/shower.
- ◆ Mount a liquid soap dispenser on the bathtub/shower wall.
- ◆ Install grab-bars on the bathtub/shower and adjacent to the toilet.
- ◆ Don't *hold* onto towel bars or soap dishes when you move in the bathroom, as they may not support your weight.
- ◆ If using the toilet is problematic, use a:
 - raised toilet seat, for difficulties getting on and off; or,
 - toilet seat with arm rests, for stabilizing difficulties.
- ◆ Use a bath bench and hand-held shower spray if you:
 - are unsteady;
 - are unable to stand; or,
 - have difficulty getting into and out of a bathtub.
- ◆ Set water temperature below scalding (e.g. set it below 120° F); and.
- ◆ Put in a night light.

Bedroom

- ◆ Sleep on a bed that is easy to get into and out of (e.g., it should not be lower than back-of-the-knee height.).
- ◆ Place a “rug grabber” between the mattress and the box spring to prevent the mattress from sliding.
- ◆ Use bedsheets and covers that are made of non-slippery material (e.g., wool or cotton).
- ◆ Place a chair with arm rests & a firm seat in the bedroom to reduce falls while dressing.
- ◆ Avoid using furniture with castors or that tends to roll.
- ◆ Place a lamp next to the bed that can be reached in the dark.
- ◆ Place a flashlight next to the lamp for use during power outages.
- ◆ Put in night lights in the bedroom and hallway leading to the bathroom.
- ◆ Place an accessible telephone next to the bed.
- ◆ Keep list of emergency telephone numbers by the telephone.
- ◆ Keep clutter off the bedroom floor.
- ◆ Replace scatter rugs with non-skid mats.
- ◆ Position clothes in the closet so they are easy to reach.

Steps & Stairs

- ◆ Install sturdy handrails on both sides of the stairs, indoors and outdoors. Each handrail should be 30-inches above the stairs and extend the full length of the stairs.
- ◆ Make sure the outdoor steps have a non-skid surface.
- ◆ Consider using motion-detector lights, which will automatically turn on when someone walks by, if:
 - light switches are not installed at the top and bottom of indoor stairs; or,

- insufficient light is available outside to clearly show entrance steps and walkways.
- ◆ Keep stairs and steps clear of packages, boxes, or clutter.
- ◆ Provide enough light to clearly see each stair and the top and bottom landings.
- ◆ Keep easily accessible flashlights at the top and bottom of the stairs in case there is a power outage.
- ◆ Replace any loose area rugs at the top and bottom of the stairs with non-skid mats.
- ◆ Make sure runner mats, carpeting or other floor covering on your stairs are well fastened.
- ◆ Use solid colored carpeting, instead of patterned, dark, or deep-pile carpeting, to show the edges of steps more clearly.
- ◆ Put non-slip treads on each bare-wood step.
- ◆ Keep stairs and outdoor steps in good condition.
- ◆ Repair loose stairway carpeting or wooden boards immediately.

Falls

Older adults, especially women, are most at risk for falling, which can result in loss of mobility and independence. Falls can lead to fractures (e.g., broken hip, ankle, ribs), traumatic brain injuries, concussions and hospitalizations. Fractures occurring in the home usually happen while performing regular activities such as walking up & down stairs, tripping, working in the kitchen or going to the bathroom. By choosing a healthy lifestyle and making minor safety adaptations, your risk of falling can be reduced.

Why Falls Happen

Medical Risk Factors

- ◆ Acute illness such as infection, flu, pneumonia and surgery;
- ◆ Medical conditions such as Arthritis, Osteoarthritis, Multiple Sclerosis, Stroke, Parkinson's Disease, Heart Disease, Cancer, Dementia and Depression; and,
- ◆ Medication side effects.

Personal Risk Factors

- ◆ Insufficient exercise can result in generalized weakness, reduction in muscle strength, poor balance, slower reaction time and coordination difficulties.
- ◆ Lifestyle habits such as smoking and excessive alcohol decrease bone strength.
- ◆ Aging causes deterioration in balance, strength, eyesight, hearing and ability to react to the environment.
- ◆ Dehydration and inadequate nutrition, especially protein, Calcium or Vitamin D, can drain strength and energy.

Lifestyle Choices

Health & Medications

- ◆ Arrange for annual vision, hearing, dental and physical checkups, which include heart and blood pressure exams.
- ◆ Ensure your diet contains the recommended amounts of protein, calcium and Vitamin D.

- ◆ Avoid smoking and excessive alcohol in-take.
- ◆ Have your supplements, prescriptions and over-the-counter medications reviewed regularly by your Health Practitioner or Pharmacist. Ask about possible side effects.
- ◆ Consult a Physiotherapist, Occupational Therapist, or a pharmacy, if you feel you need an assistive mobility device.

Exercise

- ◆ Consult with your Health Practitioner before starting an exercise program.
- ◆ Perform exercises that will help improve coordination, balance, agility and strength, especially activities that will strengthen your bones (e.g., hiking, jogging, stair climbing and using weights).
- ◆ Choose hobbies that involve exercising (e.g., dancing, bicycling, walking, Yoga, Tai Chi, gardening, bowling and golfing).

Footwear

- ◆ Wear weather appropriate footwear with good support (e.g., soles have non-slip treads and have a thickness that will enable you to “feel’ how your foot is positioned).
- ◆ Wear shoes and slippers that fit well:
 - Don’t wear loose-fitting shoes or slippers.
 - Tie shoelaces securely.
 - Don’t wear high heels.
- ◆ Don’t wear socks or stockings without also wearing shoes or slippers.

Risky Behavior

- ◆ Climbing ladders or using a chair in place of a stable step stool with a safety rail.
- ◆ Lack of awareness of medication interactions.
- ◆ Not wearing glasses or contact lenses when vision is compromised.
- ◆ Neglecting assistive mobility aids (e.g., walkers or canes) by not:
 - using them when they are needed;
 - using them correctly; or,
 - properly maintaining them.
- ◆ Lifting or trying to carry bags which are too heavy or unevenly loaded.
- ◆ Getting up from a lying or sitting position too quickly.

Social and Economic Factors

- ◆ Living alone.
- ◆ Limited or no social support or connections available closely.
- ◆ Insufficient income to:
 - choose a healthy lifestyle through diet and physical activity; and/or,
 - cover home adaptations, as age and mobility changes take place.
- ◆ Lack of accessible and safe housing.
- ◆ Lack of access to health care services due to geography, social isolation, language or literacy issues.

What to Do if You Fall

- ◆ Don’t panic. Take a moment to catch your breath.
- ◆ Assess your situation and determine if you are injured.

- ◆ If you decide to get up:
 - Lie on your side, bend the leg that is on top and lift yourself onto your elbows or hands.
 - Pull yourself toward an armchair or other sturdy object.
 - Kneel, while placing both hands on the chair or object.
 - Place your stronger leg in front, holding onto the chair or object.
 - Stand up.
 - Very carefully, turn and sit down.
- ◆ If you cannot get up:
 - If you feel any discomfort or are unable to get up, try to get help.
 - Call out for help if you think you can be heard.
 - If you have an emergency call device (e.g., Medic Alert) or telephone at hand, use it.
 - If you don't have an emergency call device, try to slide yourself towards a telephone or a place where you will be heard.
 - Make noise with your cane or another object to attract attention.
 - Wait for help in the most comfortable position for you.
 - If you can, place a pillow under your head and cover yourself with a piece of clothing or a blanket to stay warm.
 - Try to move your joints to ease circulation and prevent stiffness.

- ◆ Report the fall to your Health Care Provider and discuss medical, environmental and lifestyle factors which may have led to the fall and how you might lower your risk of future falls.

Oxygen Therapy

When oxygen is being used in the home, safety measures must be taken to protect all members of the household. Some precautions you can take are:

- ◆ Do not allow smoking in a room that contains oxygen equipment.
- ◆ Do not store oxygen equipment near a heat source or open flame.
- ◆ Do not use electrical equipment within 5-feet of the oxygen cylinder, which includes the tubing and nasal cannula/mask.
- ◆ Do not use extension cords with oxygen equipment.
- ◆ Do not place any of the following near an oxygen system:
 - aerosol cans or sprays;
 - grease, oil, & petroleum products; and,
 - flammable material.
- ◆ Prevent tripping by securing:
 - loose cords;
 - extra tubing; and,
 - floor mats & throw rugs
- ◆ Ensure functioning smoke detectors and fire extinguishers are kept in the home at all times.
- ◆ Turn cylinder valve off when the oxygen is not in use.
- ◆ Do not store full and empty cylinders together.
- ◆ Keep a back-up supply of oxygen in case of an emergency.

Medical Equipment

Home medical equipment refers to assistive devices that individuals use to manage their care at home, e.g.:

- ◆ hospital bed;
- ◆ mobility aids (canes, crutches, walkers, scooters, manual & power wheelchairs);
- ◆ floor or ceiling lift devices;
- ◆ oxygen concentrators;
- ◆ pressure relief mattresses;
- ◆ non-conventional glucose monitors;
- ◆ personal care aids (bath chairs, commodes, dressing aids);
- ◆ prostheses (artificial limbs);
- ◆ orthotics (therapeutic footwear); and,
- ◆ oxygen concentrators.

Safety Measures for Medical Equipment

- ◆ Provide adequate electrical power.
- ◆ Register electrically powered equipment (e.g., oxygen, ventilator) with your local power company.
- ◆ Notify power company if there is a power outage and you are using oxygen, a ventilator, or an IV pump. Check their batteries regularly.
- ◆ Take precautions with electrical outlets, e.g.:
 - Keep appliances and cords clean and in good condition.
 - Avoid “octopus” outlet with several plugs.
 - Use grounded electrical outlets.
 - Unplug electrical outlets before water comes in contact with them.
- ◆ Keep manufacturer’s instructions nearby.
- ◆ Perform routine and preventative maintenance.
- ◆ Contact the supplier for instructions if you have equipment problems.

Medication Management

- ◆ Keep a list of each medication you take and know the reason for taking it.
- ◆ Advise your doctor about all medications, over-the-counter drugs, vitamins and supplements you take.
- ◆ Don’t take medication that was prescribed to another individual.
- ◆ Always read the label before taking a medication.
- ◆ Always follow your doctor’s directions on when and how to take the medication.
- ◆ Keep your medication in its original container.
- ◆ Store medication according to its instructions, e.g.:
 - Keep in a cool, dry place.
 - Protect from excessive cold or heat, unless instructed otherwise.
 - Keep out of direct sunlight.
 - Keep in refrigerator, if required.

- ◆ Keep medications and cleaning materials out of reach of children, pets and confused individuals.

Power Outages

- ◆ Determine if power outage is limited to your home or is also out in the neighborhood.
- ◆ If power outage is limited to your home, check:
 - fuse box or circuit breaker panel;
 - service wires leading to the house. If they are on the ground or damaged, don't go within 35 feet and notify your electric supply authority.
- ◆ If the power is also out in the surrounding area, contact the utility company.
- ◆ If instructed to do so, cut off your utilities at the main valves.
- ◆ If power outage occurs when you are in an elevator, press the alarm button.
- ◆ If the power outage is expected to be long-term or is widespread:
 - Set up your generator, if you have one
 - Never use charcoal or gas barbecues, camping heating equipment, or home generators indoors or in garages.
 - Collect flashlights and Emergency Kit.
 - Shut off the switches on all electrical items to prevent damage to appliances and equipment once power is turned back on.
 - Turn off stove burners and oven, even if the stove is gas.
 - Turn off the lights.
 - Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed.
 - Limit phone usage.
 - Stay put and limit driving, as traffic light outages may cause hazardous driving conditions.
 - Dress appropriately for weather conditions.
- ◆ If leaving the premises, each person should tell the others where he/she is going.
- ◆ Attempt to communicate or receive communication via:
 - phone (cell or land);
 - social media;
 - email, if there is a computer/laptop with a battery backup; or,
 - radio or television, if have battery backup.

Extreme Heat

- ◆ Keep you're your home cool, if possible, with air-conditioner.
- ◆ If you do not have an air-conditioning, open windows (if outdoor air quality permits) and use fans.
- ◆ Drink a glass of fluid every 15 to 20-minutes and drink at least one gallon each day.
- ◆ Avoid drinking alcohol and caffeine, as they cause dehydration.
- ◆ Wear light-colored, loose-fitting clothing.
- ◆ Take frequent cool showers/baths or sponge off with a cold, wet cloth.
- ◆ Watch for signs of heat exhaustion: cold, clammy skin, heavy sweating, nausea, weakness.
- ◆ If dizziness or overheating occurs find a cool place; sit or lie down; drink water; wash head and face.

- ◆ Seek immediate medical attention if you show any signs of heat stroke (e.g., hot, dry skin; body temperature above 103° F; fast, strong pulse; confusion).
- ◆ Do chores or work during cooler hours or distribute the workload evenly throughout the day.

Extreme Cold

Hypothermia happens when a person's core body temperature drops at least 2° F. below the normal body temperature of 98.6 ° F.

- ◆ Ways to prevent hypothermia:
 - Ensure adequate food, clothing, shelter, and sources of heat are available.
 - Use electric blankets & heating pads with auto shut off feature to avoid burns.
 - Wear layers of clothing, which help to keep in body heat.
 - Keep moving, as physical activity raises body temperature.
 - Avoid alcohol & tobacco, which increase susceptibility to cold.
- ◆ If you must go outdoors:
 - Check weather forecast.
 - Dress in layers with a wind-resistant outer layer.
 - Wear a hat, mittens or insulated gloves and something to keep your face warm (e.g., scarf, neck tube, face mask).
 - Wear warm and waterproof footwear.
 - When it is very cold, or wind chill is significant, cover as much of your exposed skin as possible and keep dry.
 - Keep moving and seek shelter if cold weather or windchill become significant.

Home Safety Checklist

SAFETY CRITERIA	YES	NO
ENTRANCE TO HOME		
• Are there outside lights covering the sidewalks and/or other entrance ways?		
• Are the steps & sidewalks in good repair and free from debris/material?		
• Is a ramp needed?		
• Are the railings on the steps secured?		
• Is there a functional peephole in the front door?		
• Does the door have a deadbolt lock that does not require a key to open it from the inside (unless client has a tendency to wander)?		
GENERAL		
• Is there an Emergency Plan in place?		
• Are working smoke detectors installed?		
• Is there a "ready-to-use" fire extinguisher(s) on the premises?		
• Are inside halls and stairways free of clutter/debris?		
• Are throw rugs removed?		
• Are there sturdy handrails or banisters by all steps and stairs?		
• Are electrical cords non-frayed and placed in a manner to avoid tripping?		
• Are electric outlets/switches overloaded (e.g. warm to the touch)?		
• Are rugs secured around the edges?		
• Are hazardous products labeled and kept in a secure place?		
• Is there a need for a stool to reach high shelves/cupboards?		
• Is smoking paraphernalia handled safely (e.g. cigarettes put out)?		
• Does anybody smoke in homes where oxygen is in use?		
• Are all animals, on site, controlled?		
• Is the home free from bugs, mice and/or animal waste?		
• Are materials stored safely and at a proper height?		
• Does the client wear an emergency response necklace/bracelet?		
• Are polished floors no waxed or waxed-free?		
MEDICATIONS		
• Are all medications marked clearly?		
• Are medications named?		
• Are medications dated?		
• Are instructions given as to how medications are to be taken?		
• Are instructions given as to when medications are to be taken?		
MEDICAL EQUIPMENT/SUPPLIES		
• Are used needles placed in a sharp container?		
• Is oxygen tubing kept off the walking path?		

SAFETY CRITERIA	YES	NO
• Is medical equipment properly stored?		
LIVING AREAS		
• Are doorways wide enough to carry loads through and get a wheelchair/walker through?		
• Are light switches accessible so they can be turned on/off without walking across a dark room?		
• Are sofas & chairs high and firm enough for easy sitting and rising?		
• Is there a telephone in the room that is easily accessible from the bed?		
• Is list of emergency telephone numbers by the telephone?		
• Do telephone cords/electronic wires run across walking areas?		
• Are there castors or wheels on furniture?		
• Does sitting furniture have armrests which are strong enough for getting in & out?		
• Are phone & extension cords out of the foot traffic area?		
• Is the room clutter-free?		
• Are heaters at least 12 inches from furniture and drapes?		
BATHROOM		
• Are there glass doors on the bathtub/shower?		
• Is there a non-skid surface/mat in the bathtub/shower?		
• Are there grab-bars on the bathtub/shower and adjacent to the toilet?		
• Is there a raised toilet seat (if client has trouble getting on/off toilet)?		
• Is a hand-held shower spray required?		
• Is the water temperature below scalding (e.g. below 120°)?		
• Is there a shower bench/bath seat with a hand-held shower wand available?		
• Does the bathroom have a night light?		
• Are there unsafe loose rugs, carpet or tiles on floor?		
BEDROOM		
• Are there any scatter rugs?		
• Is the bed lower than "back-of-the-knee" height?		
• Is there a chair with armrests & firm seat (to reduce falls while dressing)?		
• Does furniture have castors or roll?		
• Is there a telephone in the room that is easily accessible from the bed?		
• Is list of emergency telephone numbers by the telephone?		
• Is there a flashlight, light switch or lamp beside the bed?		
• Is there a night light?		
KITCHEN		
• Is the floor waxed or in a slippery condition?		
• Are there any flammable items near the heat source?		
• Do the "ON" buttons work on all appliances?		

SAFETY CRITERIA	YES	NO
• Are stove controls accessible and easy to use?		
• Are items used the most stored between eye and knee level?		
• Is there an uncluttered workspace near the cooking area (to avoid having to carry items)?		
• Are dishcloths, dishtowels & oven mitts away from stove burners/flames?		
LIGHTING		
• Is there adequate lighting in all stairways and hallways?		
• Is there a light switch at both the top and bottom of stairs?		
• Is there a night light between bedroom and bathroom?		
CLIENT'S/RESIDENT'S POTENTIAL FOR VIOLENCE		
• Is there a history of violence?		
• Are there violence fantasies or plans of violence?		
• Is there a level of support from significant other?		
• Are there signs & symptoms? i.e.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ staring and eye contact; ○ tone & volume of voice; ○ pacing ○ anxiety; ○ mumbling 		
NEIGHBORHOOD HAZARDS		
• Is there sufficient lighting?		
• Can individuals be heard if they call for help?		
• Are there people nearby who can help?		
• Are there improvements that can be made to enhance safety?		
OTHER SAFETY HAZARDS		
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