The Home Falls Prevention Checklist

Simple changes that can help prevent falls and make your home safer

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Most of us feel safest in our own homes. But familiar surroundings can hide everyday hazards, particularly as we get older.

A loose rug, poor lighting, an awkward step or a slippery bathroom floor can all increase the risk of falling. And it's not just the home itself. Changes in balance, eyesight, strength or mobility can make everyday activities more difficult.

The good news is that many falls can be prevented. Often, small and inexpensive changes can make a real difference. This practical checklist is designed for older people and family members to complete together, helping you identify potential risks and decide what needs attention.



How to use this checklist

Walk through each room, ideally with a family member or friend, and check the items below.

- **Tick each box** when you've checked the item and are satisfied it's safe.
- Leave anything that needs attention unticked.
- Start with the most urgent risks. You don't need to tackle everything at once.
- **Use the action table on the final page** to record anything that needs changing, who can help and when you plan to get it done.

Top tip: Think about how you use your home at different times of day, particularly when getting up during the night.

1. Hallways and living areas

These are places you move through every day, often without thinking about what's underfoot.

☐ Walkways are free from shoes, bags, pet toys and other clutter.

☐ Rugs and mats lie flat, are securely fixed or have been removed if they could cause a trip.

☐ Carpets are securely fitted, without loose edges, tears or raised sections.

☐ Electrical cables are kept away from walking routes and safely secured.

☐ Furniture is arranged to leave clear, wide pathways, particularly if a walking aid is used.

☐ Chairs and sofas are firm, stable and easy to get in and out of.

☐ Door thresholds and changes in floor level are clearly visible and easy to navigate.

☐ Frequently used items can be reached without stretching, bending awkwardly or climbing.

Worth checking: Can you walk from your favourite chair to the kitchen or bathroom without having to move around furniture or obstacles?

2. Stairs and steps

Stairs deserve particular attention because a fall here can have serious consequences.

☐ Stairs are completely clear of shoes, laundry and other objects.

☐ Handrails are firmly attached, easy to grip and ideally fitted on both sides.

☐ Stair carpets or coverings are securely fitted, with no loose edges.

☐ Lighting is bright enough to see every step clearly.

☐ Light switches are accessible at both the top and bottom of the stairs.

☐ The edges of steps are easy to distinguish, particularly if the carpet is patterned.

☐ Items aren't carried in a way that prevents safe use of the handrail.

☐ Any stairlift is properly maintained and can be used safely.

Worth checking: Is there anything that makes you hesitate, feel unsteady or reach for extra support when using the stairs? If so, don't ignore it.

3. Bedroom and getting up at night

Night-time trips to the bathroom are a particularly important time to think about fall prevention.

☐ There is a clear, unobstructed route from the bed to the bathroom.

☐ A bedside light or switch can be reached without getting out of bed.

☐ Nightlights or motion-activated lights illuminate the route to the toilet.

☐ The bed is at a comfortable height for sitting down and standing up.

☐ Glasses, a phone and any walking aid are within easy reach.

☐ Slippers fit securely, have backs and non-slip soles, and aren't worn out.

☐ There is a stable place to sit when getting dressed, if needed.

☐ Getting out of bed doesn't regularly cause dizziness or unsteadiness.

Worth checking: Try walking the route from the bedroom to the bathroom after dark, with the normal night-time lighting switched on. Can you see clearly and move safely?

4. Bathroom and toilet

Wet surfaces, awkward movements and limited space can make bathrooms especially challenging.

☐ The bath or shower has a suitable non-slip surface.

☐ Properly installed grab rails are available wherever extra support is needed.

☐ Bath mats lie flat and have non-slip backing.

☐ The toilet is at a comfortable height, with suitable support if needed.

☐ Soap, shampoo and towels can be reached without stretching or bending awkwardly.

☐ Getting into and out of the bath or shower feels safe and manageable.

☐ Bathroom lighting is bright enough, including for night-time visits.

Worth checking: If getting into or out of the bath is becoming difficult, an occupational therapist can recommend safer options, such as grab rails, a shower seat or other adaptations.

Important: Towel rails and ordinary bathroom fittings should never be used as substitutes for properly installed grab rails.

5. Kitchen and everyday tasks

Reaching, bending, carrying things and dealing with slippery floors can all affect balance.

☐ Everyday items are stored within easy reach, ideally between waist and shoulder height.

☐ There is no need to stand on chairs or climb to reach frequently used items.

☐ Walkways between the cooker, sink, fridge and work surfaces are clear.

☐ Lighting is bright enough to see spills and obstacles.

☐ Heavy or awkward items can be moved without losing balance.

☐ There is somewhere safe to sit when preparing food or doing tasks that cause tiredness.

Worth checking: Are there everyday activities that now involve stretching, climbing or balancing awkwardly? Rearranging storage may remove the need altogether.

6. Outdoor paths and entrances

Although this checklist focuses on the home, the route to your front or back door matters too.

☐ Paths, patios and steps are even, with no loose paving or damaged surfaces.

☐ Moss, algae and wet leaves are regularly cleared to reduce slipping.

☐ Outdoor steps are clearly visible and have secure handrails where needed.

☐ Outside lights illuminate entrances, paths and steps.

☐ Doormats lie flat and cannot slip or catch underfoot.

☐ Doorsteps and thresholds are easy to manage, particularly when carrying shopping or using a walking aid.

☐ Garden hoses, bins, tools and other objects are kept away from walkways.

☐ There is a safer alternative route when paths are icy or slippery.

Worth checking: Think about arriving home after dark, perhaps carrying shopping. Is the entrance well lit, easy to access and free from obstacles?

7. Personal safety: don't overlook these checks

Not every fall is caused by something on the floor. Changes in health, strength, balance or medication can also increase the risk.

☐ Everyday shoes and slippers fit well, support the foot and have good grip.

☐ Eyesight has been checked recently and glasses are up to date.

☐ Walking sticks or frames are the correct height, in good condition and used as advised.

☐ Any medicines that may cause dizziness, drowsiness or unsteadiness have been reviewed with a GP or pharmacist.

☐ Any recent falls, near misses or balance problems have been discussed with a healthcare professional.

☐ Regular strength and balance activities are part of the routine, where appropriate.

Worth knowing: Feeling less steady isn't something you should simply accept as an inevitable part of getting older. A GP or falls prevention service may be able to identify the cause and recommend ways to help.

Five changes worth prioritising

If you're not sure where to begin, these five checks are a good starting point.

1. **Make the stairs safer**

   Clear every step, check the handrails and make sure the lighting is good.

2. **Clear the main walkways**

   Remove loose rugs, trailing cables and clutter, especially between rooms used frequently.

3. **Improve night-time lighting**

   Make it easy to see the route from the bed to the bathroom without searching for a light switch.

4. **Check the bathroom**

   Look for slippery surfaces, awkward movements and places where properly installed support might help.

5. **Take balance problems seriously**

   If someone has fallen, feels unsteady or is becoming afraid of falling, arrange a conversation with their GP.

Where to get extra help

You don't have to work everything out yourself.

Your GP or local falls prevention service

If you've fallen, are having difficulty with balance or are worried about falling, your GP can assess possible causes and may refer you for a falls assessment, physiotherapy or strength and balance support.

An occupational therapist

An occupational therapist (OT) can assess how safely you manage everyday activities at home and recommend equipment or adaptations, such as grab rails, bathing aids or changes to furniture.

You can ask your local council's adult social care team about an occupational therapy assessment. Alternatively, **contact PodSupport and we can help connect you with a private occupational therapy service.**

Your local council

Depending on your circumstances and where you live in the UK, help may be available with certain home adaptations. Eligibility, funding and assessment arrangements vary.

Need some help?

Podplan can help you understand your options and find relevant information and support. Contact our member support team if you're unsure where to start.

A final thought

A safer home doesn't have to mean making major changes or giving up independence.

Often, it's the small things — a better light, a clear walkway, a well-positioned handrail or simply moving something to an easier-to-reach shelf — that make everyday life safer and more comfortable.

And if you're completing this checklist with a parent or someone you care about, remember to involve them in the decisions. The aim isn't to take over their home. It's to help them continue enjoying it safely and confidently.

Keep this checklist somewhere handy and revisit it every six months, or sooner if there's been a fall, a change in mobility or a hospital stay.

This checklist is provided by Podplan for general information and guidance only. It is not a professional home safety assessment or a substitute for medical advice, an occupational therapy assessment or other professional recommendations. Individual needs and risks vary, and completing the checklist cannot guarantee that falls will be prevented. If you have concerns about falls, balance or mobility, please seek advice from an appropriately qualified healthcare professional. Any equipment or home adaptations should be assessed for suitability and installed correctly.

Record your next steps

Use this table to record the changes you've identified, who can help you make them and when you plan to get them done.

What needs changing?	Who can help?	By when?

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