

Slips, Trips and Falls
Avoid Them All
A Falls Risk Reduction Program



Developed by:
The NH Falls Risk Reduction Task Force
www.NHfallstaskforce.org

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Facts on Falls

1. Each year, **one-third** of people aged 65 and older and **one-half** of those 80 and older will fall.
2. Among older adults, falls are the **leading cause of injury death**. On average, **more than 70 older people die each year in New Hampshire as a result of a fall**.
3. The **majority** of falls (60%) occur at **home**.
4. More than **90% of hip fractures** among adults ages 65 and older are **caused by falls**.
5. In 2004, there were more than **320,000 hospital admissions for hip fractures**. Half could not return home or live independently.
6. In 2000, the total direct cost of all **fall injuries for people 65 and older exceeded \$19 billion**. The financial toll of older adult falls is expected to increase as our population ages, and may reach **\$54.9 billion by 2020**.
7. **Falls are not a normal part of aging**. Older adults can **take several steps to protect their independence and reduce their risk of falling**.

Sources:

1. CDC Falls Fact Sheets: <http://www.cdc.gov/homeandrecreationalafety/falls/adultsfalls.html> accessed 11/05/09
2. CDC, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, WISQARS, 2002-2006 New Hampshire Unintentional Fall Deaths and Rates per 100,000, All Races, Both Sexes, Ages 65 to 85+
3. JAGS 55:S327-S334, 2007: Quality Indicators for Falls and Mobility Problems in Vulnerable Elders

How safe is your home?

Read the following questions and answer them by checking **YES** or **NO**. **YES** means **SAFE** and **NO** means **UNSAFE** and should be corrected. Asterisk (*) indicates easy items to correct.

Kitchen

- Are drawers and cupboards closed to avoid bumping into them? Yes No
- Is the floor made of a slip resistant material? Yes No
- Do floor mats have a slip resistant backing? Yes No
- Are spills cleaned up quickly to prevent slipping? Yes No
- Is a washed floor allowed to dry before walking on it? Yes No
- Are regularly used items reachable without climbing, bending or stooping? Yes No
- If there is a step stool, does it have a wide leg base, rubber tips, and handrails? Yes No
- Is there good lighting around the stove, sink, and counters, without a glare? Yes No
- Can you safely carry hot food from the stove to the table? Yes No
- Are electrical cords from appliances safely stored and off the floor? Yes No

Hallway and Stairs

- Are your railings sturdy, waist high, and easy to grasp along both sides of stairway, including those to the basement? Yes No
- Are stairs in good repair? Yes No
- Are stairs free of clutter? Yes No
- Is bright, non-skid tape placed on the top and bottom steps to indicate where they begin and end? Yes No
- Are step surfaces non-skid and even? Yes No
- Are all carpets and runners secured? Yes No
- Are light switches at the top and bottom of the stairs? Yes No
- Is the hallway and stairway adequately lit? Yes No
- If there is a change in the level between rooms, is it easily seen? Yes No

Bathrooms

- Do the tub and shower have rubber mats, non-skid strips or non-skid surfaces? Yes No
- Are towels, shampoo, and soap within easy reach? Yes No
- Is there a grab bar on the wall or the side of the tub or shower, which is both properly installed and designed to hold the weight of a person? Yes No
- Is there a tub seat? Yes No
- Is there a portable hand held showerhead? Yes No
- Is there an appropriate toilet seat and grab bars around the toilet? Yes No
- Is the floor slip-resistant? Is it free of loose rugs and loose tiles? Yes No
- Is there a way to prevent slippery floors after bathing? Yes No
- Are electrical cords from appliances safely stored and off the floor? Yes No

Bedrooms

- Is there a well-lit pathway from the bedroom to the bathroom? Yes No

- Do you have a light or flashlight within easy reach of the bed? Yes No
- Is there a telephone that's easy to reach from the bed? Yes No
- If there are extension cords, are they secured to the wall, not across the floors or under carpets? Yes No
- Is there something sturdy to hold on to next to the bed to assist in getting in and out? Yes No
- Are small rugs secured with carpet tape or non-skid backing? Yes No
- Is there a bedside table for glasses, books, etc rather than cluttering the floor beside the bed? Yes No
- If a cane or walking device is needed, is it kept at hand but not in the way? Yes No

Living Room/General Living Areas

- Are the carpets flat and in good condition? Yes No
- Are small rugs and runners secured with carpet tape or non-skid backing? Yes No
- Is the furniture placed to allow wide walkways? Yes No
- Are walkways clear of tripping hazards such as low furniture, grandchildren's toys and electrical and telephone cords? Yes No
- Are chairs and sofas high enough for easy sitting and standing? Yes No
- Are the chairs and tables stable enough to support weight if leaned on? Yes No
- Is there adequate light when entering each room/area? Yes No

Entrances and Outdoor Walkways

- Are the outdoor stairs and walkways free from cracks, dips, obstacles, leaves, ice, snow and holes? Yes No
- During the winter, is sand and/or salt available for slippery surfaces to ensure safety? Yes No
- Do the stairways have secure handrails? Yes No
- Is the entrance well lit at night? Yes No

Additional Home Safety Questions

- Is there a way to access Emergency Services in each room if you fall or need help, for instance by phone, pull cord, or personal alert device? Yes No
- Is the hot water temperature set to 120 degrees or lower to avoid scald burns? Yes No
- Is there at least one working smoke detector on each level of the home and near each bedroom? Yes No
- Are smoke detectors tested monthly? Yes No
- Are the batteries replaced twice a year? Yes No
- Is there a carbon monoxide detector on each level of the home? Yes No
- Is there a fire extinguisher in the home? Yes No
- Are emergency phone numbers beside each phone? Yes No
- Are fireplaces protected by a screen or glass door? Yes No

ACTION PLAN

Please indicate areas needing attention. Include a brief correction plan and if an alteration has been made:

Funding may be available for Home Modifications. For more information call ServiceLink toll free at 1-866-634-9412.

Developed by the NH Falls Risk Reduction Task Force, **1-800-852-3345, ext. 4700.**