

Calvary Community Care Fall-Proofing Your Home

Falls and Injury Prevention – How not to fall for it



Over half of slips, trips and falls happen in and around the home. Some of the problem lies with us, and some with our houses and gardens. Hazards are easy to overlook but can also be easy to fix.

Take a fresh look at your house to see if it is helping you to stay independent and active. Do you and your house still suit each other? Sometimes little changes can make a big difference. (When you are checking your home for hazards, it is a good idea to get help from somebody who has not seen your home before. They may spot problems that you may not notice.)

Inside your Home



Bathroom and Toilet

- Install sturdy hand or grab rails in bathrooms and toilets. **Warning** – Remember a towel rail is not a grab rail and will eventually come away from the wall.
- Both a bath seat and a grab rail may be useful if the shower is over the bath. Consider a raised toilet seat or frame if the toilet is too low.
- A shower chair or stool may be useful. **Warning** – Do not use an outdoor plastic chair as a shower chair. They become brittle and can collapse.
- Design the shower so that it is spacious.
- Keep toiletries within easy reach in a shower caddy which attaches to the bath and/or shower. Have soap holders recessed (set in) so that you will not hit them if you slip.
- Consider re-hanging the bathroom and toilet doors so that they open outwards (if you fall, someone can reach you).
- Consider using non-slip surfaces in wet areas.
- Consider a (combined) long handled toe washer and foot brush.
- Consider eliminating the step into the shower



Lighting

- Use frosted light globes to help reduce glare.
- Ensure you have good lighting for security and moving around, especially at night.
- Keep a torch next to your bed and lounge chair in case of power failure.
- Install two-way light switches at each end of corridors, stairs, in living areas with more than one entry and bedrooms (with the additional switch located alongside the bed).
- Install nightlights, or switch plates with a backlit switch button, if you get up in the night.



Watch your step

- If you use a walking aid, make sure you have enough space to use it safely.
- Tuck electrical cords under furniture or close to the wall and tape them down.
- Remove rugs and mats that can slide about or secure them with double-sided tape or Velcro. Dispose of rugs or mats that curl or fold over easily. Repair or replace torn carpet.
- Wear the right shoes - comfortable, firm-fitting, flat shoes with a low wide heel, laces, buckles or Velcro fastenings and rubber soles that grip. Wear slippers which fit well.
- Ensure clothing is not too long (touching the floor) causing a trip hazard.
- Mop up spills immediately.
- Be aware of your pet's whereabouts, toys and toilet droppings.
- Fit a draught excluder to the bottom of the door instead of using a 'door sausage/snake'.
- Store items within easy reach. This will reduce your need to bend down low, or climb on a chair or ladder.
- If you must reach a high place, use a safe step ladder with wide steps and a handrail.



Outside your home

- clearly mark the edges of steps and paths with coloured non-slip strips so that they can be seen day and night
- keep paths clear of moss, slime, wet leaves
- put away your tools and roll up your hose when not in use. Perhaps invest in a hose reel.
- have ramps installed, where possible, if steps are too difficult to climb
- install grab rails at steps
- fix uneven/ cracked paths and broken steps. Floor surfaces should be level and slip resistant.
- pathways should be level and have slip resistant firm surfaces with good drainage.
- many serious falls happen when using a ladder. Ask for help from family, friends or the council, even if you have to wait a little while for the job to be done



Remove personal hazards

These are things which may affect a person because of their particular health problems. For example, someone with cataracts can be troubled by glare that is not a problem for other people.

- Wear hearing aid/s (if you use them)
- Wear the correct glasses for what you are doing (e.g. distance glasses for moving around; reading glasses for close up work)
- If you have difficulty when transferring (i.e. moving) from bed to standing, and/or sitting in a chair to standing by yourself, there is training and education available as to how to do this independently and safely
- Seek out advice about equipment which may make things easier and safer e.g. raising the height of your bed or favourite armchair.

Think Safe - Act Safe - Be Safe



Changing things in the environment can often make you not only safer, but more independent. To cater for your particular needs it is wise to seek expert advice.

Who can help?

Occupational therapist (OT) can work with you modify your home and surrounds to better (and more safely) suit your needs.

The Independent Living Centre provides information about products and services to help people remain independent and improve their quality of life.

<http://ilcaustralia.org.au/> or ph. 1300 885 886.

My Aged Care gives you access to a range of information and support which can be delivered to you in your home. It is for people 65yrs+, or 50yrs+ for an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person.

www.myagedcare.gov.au or ph. 1800 200 422.

Yellow Pages under 'Floor Treatment Products'

Hardware stores have non-slip strips, paint and backing.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs

White or Gold card holders: ph.133 254.

Regional callers: 1800 555 254.

<http://www.dva.gov.au/health-and-wellbeing/home-and-care/aged-and-community-care>

Your local council may be able to assist with some of the work to be undertaken in your home either by subsidising some of the work to be undertaken, or by providing you with a list of tradesmen who have appropriate licences and police clearances.

References

Help yourself up to Stay Independent at Home (poster)

<http://bit.ly/2o3vads>

Injury Control Council of WA

'*Stay on your Feet WA*'

<https://www.stayonyourfeet.com.au/>

ACC New Zealand

'*Standing up to falls. Your guide to preventing falls and protecting your independence*'

<http://bit.ly/2niHAgX>

Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Healthcare

'*Preventing Falls and Harm from Falls. Best Practice Guidelines for Australian Community Care 2009*'

<http://bit.ly/2o3AJZv>

Revised and re-published by the Commonwealth of Australia 2011

'*Don't Fall For It - A guide to preventing falls for older people*'

<http://bit.ly/2ovW0vz>

Need support? Calvary Community Care can support safe, independent living at home with a variety of services and expert advice. Call 1300 66 00 22 for more information.