

Preventing Falls Home Safety Checklist

There are several things you can do to prevent falls. The checklists below include examples to reduce your risk. Check off each box when you complete an item.

Bathroom Equipment

- ☐ Install safety grab bars next to the toilet.
- ☐ Attach toilet safety frame to toilet (to avoid installing bars into the wall).
- ☐ Use a commode beside the bed if you can't get to the bathroom. You can also use it over the toilet. You can get drop arm commodes so you can slide from bed or wheelchair.
- ☐ Use raised toilet seat. After total hip replacement the toilet seat should be a few inches higher than the distance from knee to floor.
- ☐ Use nightlight in the bathroom.
- ☐ Install safety grab bars around tub or in the shower stall.
- ☐ Suction cup grab bars are only advised to be used for balance, **not** for pulling up to stand. (Remove after each use).
- ☐ Use bathmat in tub.
- ☐ Use nonskid rug beside tub or shower. Put the rug away after bathing so it does not get in the way.
- ☐ Use an adjustable shower seat with back in tub.
- ☐ Use a tub transfer bench if you cannot step over the side of the tub.
- ☐ Use a hand-held shower head with the shower seat.

Safe Bathing Tips

- ☐ Use clear shower curtain or shower doors to let in more light.
- ☐ Use a long-handled sponge to wash feet and back.

- ☐ Remove unused furniture from bathroom.
- ☐ Put soap in a nylon stocking and hang from a faucet so it won't fall onto the floor of the shower.
- ☐ Have someone help you bathe, if needed.

Bedroom

- ☐ Get a bed rail to help you roll or sit up at the side of bed.
- ☐ Use a nightlight in the bedroom and the hallway to the bathroom.
- ☐ Have a clock and phone within easy reach of the bed.
- ☐ Have a flashlight near the bed in case the power goes out.
- ☐ Get a platform to help get on and off a high bed.
- ☐ Tuck in blankets and long bedspreads so they aren't on the floor.

Living Room

- ☐ Get furniture risers or have a platform built to put under your favorite chair.
- ☐ Get a power lift chair if you cannot rise to stand without help.

Stairs

- ☐ Use stairs only with help, if needed.
- ☐ Install handrails for stairs, inside and outside of home. Railings on both sides is best.
- ☐ Do not carry things on stairs. If you must carry something put it in a bag with handles.
- ☐ Remove clutter on stairs.
- ☐ Have good lighting with light switches at top and bottom of staircase.

- ☐ Carpet should be well-fastened to steps.
- ☐ Steps should have non-skid surface. You can find non-slip strips at most home improvement stores.
- ☐ Use different colored tape to mark steps for people with low vision.
- ☐ Install a vertical grab handle on door frame at top step from the garage into the house.

Floors

- ☐ Remove slippery throw rugs or rugs with edges that curl.
- ☐ Use only non-slip rugs at sinks, doorways and outside the tub.
- ☐ Attach rugs you don't want to get rid of from the floor with double-sided tape or duct tape.
- ☐ Avoid shiny, slippery floor treatments (especially for people with low vision).

Traffic Paths

- ☐ Keep all cords away from walkways. Remove cords from under rugs because they are a fire hazard. Remove any low tables, furniture with sharp edges, glass panels and furniture that you may trip over. Or move these items if you use them for support.
- ☐ Remove clutter from pathways. Walkers need a path at least **25** inches wide.
- ☐ Oxygen tubes can be hazards. Put pieces of brightly colored tape every 12 inches so the tubing is easier to see. Try not to have the tubing right in your pathway.

Pets

- ☐ Small or slow-moving dogs and cats can get under your feet, walker or crutches. Be careful with your pets

and teach them to keep clear of the walker.

- ☐ Turn on lights so you can see your pets and they can see you.
- ☐ Keep pet food dishes out of walkways.
- ☐ Do not put plastic backed potty-training pads in your pathway. They are very slippery if you step on them.

Footwear

- ☐ In your house wear low-heeled shoes with good support and thin, hard, nonskid soles. Wear thick treaded shoes for walking outdoors.
- ☐ Wear shoes that fit you well – **not** too loose!
- ☐ Avoid sloppy, backless bedroom slippers or sandals. These make you shuffle your feet. Wear moccasin style slippers instead.
- ☐ If you have diabetes you should wear shoes with a sole to protect the bottom of their feet. Do not walk around the house or outside barefoot or just in socks. You need thin soled shoes to maximize the feeling in the bottom of your feet.
- ☐ Yaktrax – Wear only outside on ice and snow. They slide on tiled floors and garage floors. They damage wood floors.

Assistive Devices

- ☐ Walk with the help of a device or another person, if needed.
- ☐ Use crutches or walker for walking. Follow weight limits as directed by your doctor and therapist.
- ☐ Use a cane for balance if you can put full weight on both feet.
- ☐ Use wheelchair as needed or as advised by your doctor or therapist. Lock brakes before standing up or sitting on the wheelchair.

- ❑ Lock brakes before sitting on a 4 wheeled walker seat. **Do not** use a 4 wheeled walker as a wheelchair. Use braces as urged by doctor or therapist. Always wear a shoe when walking with an ankle brace.
- ❑ Get a reacher for picking up objects from the floor or above your head.
- ❑ Get a **Personal Emergency Response System**. Wear all the time if you live alone. You can get lifelines are through:
 - Philips Lifeline: **855-332-7799**
 - Advanced Security Solutions: **(608) 831-1688**
 - Meriter Hospital: **(608) 417-3733**
 - SSM St. Mary's VoiceCare: **(608) 223-7967**
 - Stoughton Hospital: **(608) 873-2372**

Safety Tips

Do you get **dizzy** when you stand up? Get up slowly from sitting, lying down, sitting on your heels or bending over. Talk to your doctor about your medicines and make sure you drink enough liquids. This is very important if you have had the flu with fever, vomiting, diarrhea or just feeling sick.

Treating illnesses can prevent a fall. Get treated for illnesses as soon as you can.

Avoid **rushing** to answer the phone or doorbell. A portable phone that you can take from room to room with you is a good idea for security and safety. Do not try to open windows or doors that are stuck or hard to open. When bending over to pick up items from the floor or a lower level like a step or low shelf, use one hand on a counter, furniture, or walker for support. Arrange items in the kitchen and closets so they can

be removed without overreaching or bending.

Use different colors in your home so the furniture does not blend into the floor.

Have your **vision** checked every year. Bifocals or trifocals can affect depth perception and seeing steps and curbs. Medicare pays for yearly exams.

Have your **medicines** reviewed by your health care provider on a routine basis. **If the pill bottle states to take care with driving, you should also take care with walking!**

Do not combine alcohol with narcotics, sleeping pills, anti-depressants or anti-psychotic medicines. Talk to your doctor about your alcohol use. You may need to change your alcohol or medicine use.

Exercise daily if you want to be mobile.

Walking helps your overall health, but studies show you need to strengthen your legs and do standing balance activities to avoid falling.

Equipment

UW Health Care Direct 1345 Deming Way, Middleton, 53562: **(608) 203-2273**.

Walgreen's and other pharmacies (several locations)

Home Updates

For help installing grab bars, railings, bed rails, and other equipment) call:

- Independent Living: **(608) 274-7900**
- Accessibility Plus: **(608) 335-6779**

There are many other resources in the phone book or on the internet.

If you are a patient receiving care at UnityPoint – Meriter, Swedish American or a health system outside of UW Health, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions for any questions or concerns.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright ©1/2020. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#6626.