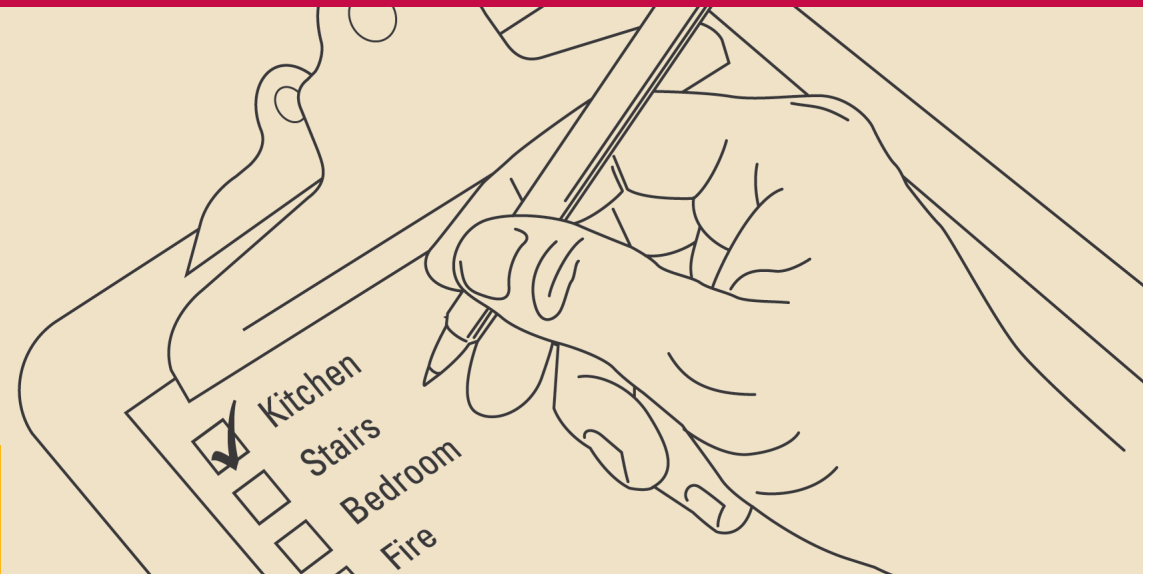


Home Safety Checker



**Staying safe
around the house**

Most of us feel safe in our homes, yet more accidents happen at home than anywhere else. Use the questions in this leaflet to do a safety check of your home. They should help you identify and resolve any possible safety risks, helping you prevent accidents in the future.

General

Are your floors clear of trailing flexes?

Coil or tape cords and wires next to the wall so you cannot trip over them. Try to organise things so your appliances are close to a socket. It may help to have an electrician put in an extra socket. Contact the National Association for Professional Inspectors and Testers (NAPIT) to find a qualified electrician. See Useful contacts, pages 10–15.

Are you careful not to overload sockets?

Overloaded sockets can be a fire hazard. If you don't have enough sockets, use a bar adaptor on a lead rather than a block adaptor. But for appliances that use a lot of power, such as heaters, irons and kettles, never fit more than one plug in each socket.

Can you walk through your rooms without having to walk around furniture?

Rearranging your furniture can help you move around your home more easily.

Do you have rucked-up or fraying carpets that you might trip over?

Replacing them or using double-sided carpet tape will help prevent them slipping.

Do you have a way to call for help if you fall or feel unsafe?

A community alarm lets you contact a 24-hour response centre at the touch of a button. Many councils run community alarm schemes. Age Concern and Help the Aged have their own community alarm services (see page 11).

Do you have an easy-to-read list of emergency phone numbers beside each phone?

List details of your gas, electricity, water and telephone suppliers, doctor, local police, local council, carer, close friends and relatives and anyone else you think may be useful. This can save valuable time in an emergency. If you are suspicious or worried, dial 999 and ask for the police.

Do you have a carbon monoxide detector?

Heaters that burn gas, coal, oil or wood can give off poisonous carbon monoxide if they are not working properly. Look for a detector bearing the Kitemark and European Standard number BS EN 50291.

Do you have a letterbox cage?

This can save you having to stoop to pick up your post. Cages also stop papers spreading across the floor, which could make you slip.

Do your slippers fit properly?

Worn-out or badly fitting slippers can increase your risk of falling. Be careful when wearing any long, loose-fitting clothing like a dressing gown or ankle-length dress, too; it is easy to catch your foot in them and fall.

When opening the door to a caller, do you lock, stop, chain and check?

Make sure you **lock** any other external doors before going to the front door; **stop** to think about whether you are expecting anyone; put the **chain** on and look through the window or spy-hole; **check** who the caller is and ask for ID. If in doubt, keep them out.

For more information, see the free Help the Aged leaflet *Your Security* and the free Age Concern leaflet *Bogus callers – how to protect yourself*.

Bedroom

Do you have sheets and bed covers trailing on the floor?

Tuck them out of the way when you first get out of bed; it is easy to trip up when moving around.

Do you have a bedside lamp or torch?

This can help if you need to get up in the night, or if there is a power failure.

Do you have an electric blanket?

Make sure you get it serviced regularly and check for danger signs such as frayed fabric, a worn flex and scorch marks. Unplug it when you go to bed, unless you are sure it is the type that can be left on overnight. If it gets wet, do not use it until it has completely dried out.

Kitchen

Is there a clear space near the cooker?

This will allow you to put hot pans down safely.

Are the things you use every day within easy reach?

Rearrange your shelves and cupboards so the things you use most often can be reached easily. You can avoid stretching for small, lightweight items on high shelves or in low cupboards by using long-handled 'grabbers'. These can be handy in other rooms too if you drop things on the floor.

Are the pan handles turned away from the front of the cooker?

This will stop the pans getting knocked over. Make sure the handles aren't over another ring either, as this will make them too hot to lift.

Do you use a timer to remind yourself when food is ready?

If you have to leave the kitchen when cooking something on the hob, always set a timer so you don't forget about it and leave the pan to boil dry. Never leave hot oil unattended.

Is there a risk you could slip on wet flooring?

Try to clean up any spills straight away. Non-slip matting near the sink and washing machine may reduce the risk of slipping.

Are things that burn kept away from the hob?

Make sure tea-towels, kitchen roll, oven gloves and paper bags are kept away from the cooker.

Do you keep your kitchen equipment as clean as possible?

A build-up of crumbs or grease, for instance, could be a fire risk.

Do you know what to do if a pan catches fire?

Don't move the pan or throw water on it. Turn off the heat if it is safe to do so. Leave the kitchen, close the door and shout to everyone else in the house to leave. Call 999.

If you have a gas boiler, do you regularly check that the pilot light is burning?

If you find it has gone out, there should be instructions on the boiler for how to relight it. If you cannot relight it yourself, call a heating engineer out. You can find a qualified one in your area from the National Association for Professional Inspectors and Testers (NAPIT). See Useful contacts, pages 10–15.

Stairs

Are your stairs free from clutter?

Avoiding storing things on the stairs, even temporarily. Always check them as you walk up and down.

Do you have good lighting?

Good lighting is particularly important on the stairs, where it can help you avoid tripping.

Do you have solid handrails, preferably on both sides?

Handrails are important even on small flights of stairs.

Do you have a two-way light switch? This means light switches at the top and bottom of the stairs.

You may wish to get an electrician to fit one if you don't have one.

Can you easily see the edges of each step?

Marking the edge of each step with paint or a strip of non-slip masking tape will make them more visible. If you use tape, make sure it stays in good condition and doesn't become a trip hazard. If you have a care assessment from your local social services, it may be worth discussing this with the person who assesses you.

Do you have plug-in night lights?

These turn on automatically at night-time and provide a low light that can help you see your way to the bathroom if you get up at night. They will also help you see where the stairs are so you don't fall down them.

Do you have emergency power-failure lights?

These lights plug into power sockets and remain lit if there is a power failure. This means that if the mains power fails after dark, you will still be able to find your way around.

Bathroom

Do you have a hand rail, non-slip bath mat and bath seat?

These can help you keep your balance when getting in and out of the bath. Make sure your bath mat doesn't slide on the floor when you walk on it as it could slip from under you.

You may wish to contact your local council to see if it can provide you with bathroom safety equipment or financial help towards the cost. See the free Help the Aged information sheet no. 4, *Home Repairs and Improvements*, for more information.

Are your medicines stored in the bottle they came in, out of reach of children and pets, and locked away?

For more information on taking your medicines safely, see the free Help the Aged leaflet *Managing Your Medicines*.

Are any mains-powered electrical appliances kept out of the bathroom?

Appliances such as hairdryers, heaters and electric radios should never be used in the bathroom.

Garden

Are your paths clear of leaves and overgrowing plants?

Keeping your garden tidy and free of obstacles will make it a lot safer.

Are your paving stones free from moss and algae?

Moss and algae become very slippery when wet. They thrive in moist, shady areas, so prevent them growing by pruning overhanging branches to improve the light and air circulation. You can buy products that you apply and rinse off to remove algae, or ask someone to remove it with a pressure washer.

Do you take extra care if you have to go out in icy weather?

Spread salt or salty sand on your steps if you need to go outside.

If you are using a ladder, is it at a safe angle and anchored at its base?

Never use a ladder when you are on your own; it is far safer to have someone with you who can hold the ladder steady.

Do you lock tools away once you have finished using them?

Always use tools carefully and place them in a safe position when you put them down.

Do you use a power point fitted with a residual current device (RCD) when using power tools and electric mowers?

An RCD will shut off the power if an electrical fault develops or if you accidentally cut through the flex.

Fire

Do you smoke?

If so, use deep ashtrays and stub each cigarette out properly. Never smoke in bed.

Do you have a smoke alarm on each floor?

It is vital to have one bearing the British Standard number BS5446 and the Kitemark. Test it regularly and keep it free from dust. Change the battery at least once a year. There are special smoke alarms for people with hearing difficulties – these have strobe lights, and pads you can put under your pillow at night. If the alarm detects smoke, the pad will vibrate to wake you. Contact the RNID for more information; see page 13.

Have you planned a fire escape route?

Preparing and planning an escape route can save valuable time in a fire. Contact your local fire brigade to see if it offers a Home Fire Risk Check; this can give you further advice on fire safety in your home.

If you have an open fire, do you use a fire guard?

Fire guards let you safely enjoy the benefits of a fire.

Are you careful never to dry clothes over or near a fire?

Drying clothes near a fire or other heater can be a fire risk.

Useful contacts

Age Concern and Help the Aged

Age Concern

For more information and details of your local Age Concern in England, please call the Age Concern Information Line on freephone 0800 00 99 66 or visit www.ageconcern.org.uk

In Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales, contact:

Age Concern Northern Ireland

Tel: 028 9032 5055

Web: www.ageconcernni.org

Scottish Helpline for Older People (Age Concern Scotland)

Tel: 0845 125 9732

Web: www.olderpeoplescotland.org.uk www.ageconcernscotland.org.uk

Age Concern Cymru

Tel: 029 2043 1555

Web: www.accymru.org.uk

Help the Aged

Help the Aged produces a range of free advice leaflets and information sheets for older people. These are available from the Information Resources Team:

Information Resources Team

Help the Aged

207–221 Pentonville Road

London N1 9UZ

Tel: 020 7278 1114

If you have access to the internet you can download the advice leaflets and information sheets by logging on to www.helptheaged.org.uk

Community alarms

Help the Aged runs its own immediate-response helpline called **SeniorLink**. For more information, call 0845 603 4576 or email seniorlink@helptheaged.org.uk

Age Concern runs an emergency alarm service called **Aid Call**. For more information, call 0800 77 22 66 or visit the website: www.aidcall.co.uk/personalcare

Electrical safety

The **National Association for Professional Inspectors and Testers** (NAPIT) can provide details of qualified electricians and installers. Contact it by phone on 0870 444 1392 or search for people in your area via its website, www.napit.org.uk

General

RoSPA provides detailed advice on specific safety problems.

RoSPA
Information Centre
Edgbaston Park
353 Bristol Road
Birmingham B5 7ST
Tel: 0121 248 2130
Web: www.rospace.org.uk

Most fire and rescue services offer a **Home Fire Risk Check** (HFRC) whereby officers carry out a survey of your home and give you simple advice on fire safety issues. They can also fit free smoke alarms if needed. You are entitled to a free HFRC. Contact your local fire and rescue service for details – you will find the main number in your phone book. Or visit the Fire Kills website at www.firekills.gov.uk.

Handyperson/HandyVan schemes

Age Concern runs a **Handyperson** service. This is a subsidised service that helps older people remain living independently at home by assisting with small household repairs and adaptations, such as fitting smoke detectors, changing light bulbs and refitting loose carpets. Contact your local Age Concern to see if this service is available in your area.

HandyVan is a home support service run by Help the Aged. Trained fitters can carry out small repairs, install security equipment, change locks and fit smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors. In some cases, HandyVan can assist with fitting grab and hand rails. To find out if HandyVan operates in your area, call 01255 473999 or email handyvan@helptheaged.org.uk

Help for those with disabilities

The **Disabled Living Foundation** provides impartial advice on products and equipment that help with daily living.

Disabled Living Foundation
380–384 Harrow Road
London W9 2HU
Helpline: 0845 130 9177
Web: www.dlf.org.uk

The **Royal National Institute for Blind People (RNIB)** provides a range of services, advice and leaflets for partially sighted and blind people. Call the helpline with general enquiries and also to find details of local organisations for people with sight loss that can provide help and support.

RNIB

105 Judd Street

London WC1H 9NE

Helpline: 0845 766 9999

Email: helpline@rnib.org.uk

Web: www.rnib.org.uk

The **Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID)** can inform you of the services and equipment available to deaf and hard-of-hearing people.

RNID

19–23 Featherstone Street

London EC1Y 8SL

Tel: 0808 808 0123 (freephone)

Textphone: 0808 808 9000 (freephone)

Fax: 020 7296 8199

Email: informationline@rnid.org.uk

Web: www.rnid.org.uk

Help from your council

If you feel you need help at home, you can contact your social services department and ask for a **care assessment**. The person who assesses you should look at any health or housing needs you may have. See the free Help the Aged leaflet *Help in Your Home* for more information.

If you need financial help to carry out repairs and improvement to your home, contact your local council. Councils offer grants and loans for both small and large repairs, although the help you can get depends on where you live and whether you are a home-owner or a tenant. See the free Help the Aged information sheet no. 4, *Home Repairs and Improvements*, for more information.

Home improvement agencies

Home improvement agencies help older home-owners and private tenants organise repairs, improvements and adaptations to their homes. They are often called Care and Repair or Staying Put and can help you to decide what work you need to carry out to your home and give you advice on what financial help you can get. They can assist with grant applications, and supervise any work that is carried out.

The environmental health or housing department of your council, or a local Citizens Advice Bureau, should be able to tell you if there is a home improvement agency in your area. Alternatively:

If you live in England, contact:

Foundations
Bleaklow House
Howard Town Mill
Glossop SK13 8HT
Tel: 01457 891909
Web: www.foundations.uk.com

If you live in Scotland, contact:

Care and Repair Forum Scotland
135 Buchanan Street
Suite 2.5
Glasgow G1 2JA
Tel: 0141 221 9879
Web: www.careandrepairsotland.co.uk

If you live in Wales, contact:

Care and Repair Cymru
Norbury House, Norbury Road
Cardiff CF5 3AS
Tel: 029 2057 6286
Web: www.careandrepair.org.uk

If you live in Northern Ireland, contact:

Fold
Fold House, 3–6 Redburn Square
Holywood, Co Down BT18 9HZ
Tel: 028 9042 8314
Web: www.foldgroup.co.uk

In an emergency

If you smell gas, call the **gas emergency number** on 0800 111 999.

Carbon monoxide is known as a ‘silent killer’ because you can’t see, taste or smell it. Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning can be similar to cold, flu or food poisoning symptoms – headache, feeling sick, stomach ache, dizziness, sore throat and dry cough. Unlike flu, it doesn’t cause a high temperature. More severe poisoning can lead to a fast and irregular heart beat, hyperventilating, confusion, drowsiness and breathing difficulties. If you suspect carbon monoxide is present, call **Transco** on 0800 111 999 or, if you have solid fuel heating, call a solid fuel engineer. Contact the **Solid Fuel Association** for a list of members on 0845 601 4406.

Age Concern England (charity number 261794) has merged with Help the Aged (charity number 272786) to form Age UK, a charitable company limited by guarantee and registered in England: registered office address 207–221 Pentonville Road, London N1 9UZ, company number 6825798, registered charity number 1128267. Age Concern and Help the Aged are brands of Age UK. The three national Age Concerns in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales have also merged with Help the Aged in these nations to form three registered charities: Age Scotland, Age Northern Ireland, Age Cymru.

Contact details for your local Age Concern group may be below. If not, contact the Age Concern Information Line; see page 10.

April 2009

The four national Age Concerns in the UK have joined together with Help the Aged to form new national charities dedicated to improving the lives of older people.
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Fighting for disadvantaged older people in the UK and overseas, **WE WILL:**

COMBAT POVERTY wherever older people's lives are blighted by lack of money, and cut the number of preventable deaths from hunger, cold and disease

REDUCE ISOLATION so that older people no longer feel confined to their own home, forgotten or cut off from society

CHALLENGE NEGLECT to ensure that older people do not suffer inadequate health and social care, or the threat of abuse

DEFEAT AGEISM to ensure that older people are not ignored or denied the dignity and equality that are theirs by right

PREVENT FUTURE DEPRIVATION by improving prospects for employment, health and well-being so that dependence in later life is reduced



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