

Staying Safe at Home and on the Road

June is National Safety Month and that makes it an ideal time to revisit some important safety tips.

Home Safety

Falls are the leading cause of fatal and nonfatal injuries among older adults (a fall that causes a broken hip occurs in about 300,000 people aged 65 and older every year). Fortunately, simple safety modifications around the home can help prevent slips, trips and falls. These include:

- **Clear the floor.** Remove throw rugs, pet or children's toys, small furniture and clutter to leave plenty of room for walking.
- **Add grab bars and railings.** Consider adding rails on both sides of the stairs, and grab bars in showers, bathtubs and near the toilet.
- **Increase lighting.** Make sure indoor and outdoor spaces are well lit, including walkways and hallways.
- **Consider walking aids.** A cane or walker can help you safely navigate their home independently.
- **Wear properly fitting shoes.** Some footwear can put you at risk of falling, such as high heels and floppy sandals. Wear sturdy shoes with non-skid soles that offer plenty of support.

Driving Safety

One of the most important activities for independent older Americans is the ability to drive. Those that still do can maintain that capability for as long as possible by adhering to some advice from the Mayo Clinic.

- **Maintain strength and flexibility.** Driving requires the ability to turn a steering wheel, look over your shoulder before changing lanes, and coordinate foot movement between gas and brake pedals. Staying physically active can help you be as agile as possible. Incorporate strength training and stretching in your routine by taking advantage of your SilverSneakers fitness benefits.
- **Understand your medications.** Many prescriptions can impact driver safety by making you drowsy or dizzy. Always consult your physician or pharmacist when taking a new drug, or if an existing one is affecting you differently than before.
- **Have regular vision and hearing tests.** Sight and sound are critical to staying safe while on the road. With age also comes some vision issues such as glaucoma and cataracts that may develop gradually. Your Care N' Care plan covers regular hearing and vision preventive tests that can help rule out any concerns early on.
- **Respect your limitations and road conditions.** It is not uncommon for older adults to have difficulty driving at night or gripping a steering wheel. If you need assistive devices to drive, talk to your doctor. You can also limit your risk by avoiding driving in bad weather, heavy traffic or when roads are in poor condition, such as during construction.

During National Safety Month, safeguard your future independence by making home and lifestyle changes today.

Home Fall Prevention Checklist

Use this checklist to identify how you can reduce the risk of falling in your home.

Stairs and Steps

- Is there a light and light switch at the top and bottom of the stairs?**
Have an electrician put in an overhead light switch at the top and bottom of the stairs.
- Is the carpet on the steps loose or torn?**
Make sure the carpet is firmly attached to every step, or remove the carpet and attach non-slip threads to the stairs.
- Are the handrails loose or broken? Is there a handrail on only one side of the stairs?**
Fix loose handrails, or put in new ones. Make sure handrails are on both sides of the stairs, and are as long as the stairs.

Floors

- Do you have throw rugs on the floor?**
Remove the rugs, or use double-sided tape or a non-slip backing so the rugs won't slip.
- Do you have to walk over or around wires or cords (like lamp, telephone, or extension cords)?**
Coil or tape cords and wires next to the wall so you can't trip over them. If needed, have an electrician put in another outlet.

Kitchen

- Are things you use often on high shelves?**
Keep things you use often on the lower shelves (about waist high).
- Is your step stool sturdy?**
If you must use a step stool, get one with bar to hold on to. Never use a chair as a step stool.

Bathroom

- Is the tub or shower floor slippery?**
Put a non-slip rubber mat or self-stick strips on the floor of the tub or shower.
- Do you need some support when you get in and out of the tub, or up from the toilet?**
Have grab bars installed next to and inside the tub, and next to the toilet.

Bedroom

- Is the light near the bed hard to reach?**
Place a lamp close to the bed where it's easy to reach.
- Is the path from your bed to your bathroom dark?**
Put a nightlight so you can see where you're walking. Some nightlights turn on by themselves after dark.