

PREPARING THE HOME FOR SAFE MOBILITY



In this video, a family caregiver demonstrates some steps you can take to make a home safe for a person who has trouble with balance, walking, or other aspects of mobility (moving around inside or outside the home). Although the video starts with the person and his wife in a hospital preparing to go home, these changes can be made at any time and may even prevent a fall and hospital stay.

Remove Safety Hazards

- > Keep hallways and stairways clear of clutter.
- > Remove area rugs or secure them to the floor with double-sided tape.
- > Make sure all electrical cords are placed where no one can trip on them.
- > Clean up spills immediately.

Add Handrails and Grab Bars

- > If the person's home has stairs, make sure there are handrails on both sides of the stairs.
- > Grab bars in bathrooms are particularly important because wet surfaces can be dangerous. Also see the video "Transferring from Assistive Device to Shower or Bed" for more information.

Improve Lighting

- > Add lamps or overhead lighting where needed.
- > Make sure the top and bottom of stairways are well lit.
- > Make sure lightbulbs are the maximum allowable wattage for the lamps, and use energy-saving bulbs so you won't have to change them as often.
- > Install night-lights in areas such as paths to the bathroom or kitchen.
- > Keep a flashlight in a bedside table for extra protection.

Rearrange Items for Easy Reach

- > Check the kitchen and bathroom for frequently used items and make sure that they are easy to reach and put back.

Get Professional Help When Needed

- > Ask a friend or family member to help move heavy items, such as furniture.
- > Get an experienced carpenter or electrician to make changes, such as installing handrails and grab bars and adding light switches.

Costs

- > Many of these steps take only time, not money. But others, such as installing handrails and light switches and buying new lamps, can be costly. These costs are not covered by Medicare or other insurers. However, some community programs may be able to help financially. Call Eldercare Locator (1-800-677-1116), a program of the U.S. Administration on Aging, for assistance in your area.

Additional Resources

- > "Check for Safety: A Home Fall Prevention Checklist for Older Adults," prepared by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, offers checklists for stairs and steps, bedrooms, bathrooms, and kitchens.
- > Rebuilding Together, an organization devoted to home modifications for older adults, provides a comprehensive Home Safety Checklist, including basements, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, as well as other rooms.
- > For veterans and caregivers of veterans, visit www.caregiver.va.gov or call 1-855-260-3274 for more information about resources and support.
- > For more information on AARP's Home Alone Alliance, please visit www.aarp.org/nolongeralone.

Prepared by Carol Levine, United Hospital Fund.