

HOME SAFETY & LOVED ONES

A CHECKLIST

If you have an aging parent or loved one, you may be starting to notice signs that concern you. That's why it's vital that you make sure their living situation is as safe as possible – and our home safety checklist is designed to help.

INCREASING NUMBERS OF ITEMS AND CLUTTER

If your loved one seems to have too much stuff – from more furniture to fill the space to multiple items on surfaces, it may be a sign that they're having trouble keeping up with their home.

- ☐ Make sure that all rooms are easily walkable – if your loved one has downsized from a larger home to their current abode, did they keep too much furniture?
- ☐ Check to make sure that no pieces are weak, unstable or otherwise dangerous to use. Pay particular attention to chair arms that may be used as leverage.
- ☐ Make sure that furniture is properly secured – cabinets and bookshelves to walls, televisions to media centers, etc.

TRIP AND FALL HAZARDS

Falls are a leading cause of injury for seniors, so removing trip hazards at home is vital for your loved one's safety.

- ☐ Replace or remove worn or buckled carpet
- ☐ Make sure electrical cords do not run across pathways
- ☐ Remove throw rugs

BATHROOM SAFETY

Making sure the bathroom area is safe is critical – be sure to check towel and curtain rods to make sure they're not loose or being used in place of grab bars.

- ☐ Make sure all bath mats have anti-slip backing and bathtub and showers anti-slip flooring
- ☐ Is the toilet seat high enough for safe use? Consider replacing if not.
- ☐ Have professionally installed grab bars installed near showers, bathtubs and toilets
- ☐ Is the shower easily accessible?

LIGHTING AND ILLUMINATION

As we age, our eyesight tends to worsen – light that was sufficient to easily navigate the house and perform daily tasks is no longer enough.

- ☐ Make sure that lightbulbs are all functioning and at a high enough wattage
- ☐ Install night-lights in hallways, bathrooms and bedrooms as needed

EVALUATE FURNITURE FOR FUNCTIONALITY

As we age, not only do we need furniture that provides more support and is easier to get in and out of, over time existing furniture can lose firmness needed to support aging backs and joints.

- ☐ Ensure that chairs and couches are at the proper height and have strong armrests
- ☐ Replace or refresh cushions to make sure they provide enough support

REEVALUATE STORAGE SOLUTIONS

If your loved one had cabinets or closets that required a little bit of a reach to use, they may no longer be useful for regular storage. Your aging loved one's flexibility and stability changes, as well as the potential use of mobility devices, means making sure all regularly used spaces are accessible.

- ☐ If a step stool or ladder was needed to access certain areas, find new storage areas for anything inside
- ☐ Evaluate the cabinets – are some too high to reach or so low they require difficult bending? Rearrange the areas to make sure regularly used items are accessible.

FIRE SAFETY

Making sure that there are no fire hazards in the house is important, and it's even more critical during the holiday season, with extra lighting and decorations adding to the risk.

- ☐ Make sure that there are working smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors throughout the home. Pick an annual date and set an automated reminder to change the batteries every year.
- ☐ Make sure there's an evacuation plan, including making sure that multiple pathways out of the house are accessible and clutter free

STAIRWAY SAFETY

Navigating stairs becomes more difficult as we age, and the risk of slips and falls increases.

- ☐ Make sure the staircase is well-lit and free of clutter
- ☐ Make sure there are steady handrails on both sides of the stairs
- ☐ If your loved one has mobility issues or is using a mobility device, consider looking into stair lift systems

TEMPERATURE

As our bodies age, our sensitivity to temperature fluctuations changes. In addition, unusual thermostat choices could be an indication your loved one is worried about heating and cooling costs and the impact on their finances.

- ☐ Consider a smart monitoring system
- ☐ Make sure that all thermostats are working and easily accessible to your loved one

BEDROOM COMFORT

If your loved one is still using the same bed and mattress they have for years, it's important to make sure that it's still suitable for them – a bed that is too high or low can cause issues getting in and out of, and the wrong mattress can cause back and joint issues.

- ☐ If, when sitting on the bed, your loved one's knees are above their hips, the bed is too low
- ☐ If the feet do not touch the ground, the bed is too high
- ☐ Consider replacing the mattress if it's several years old; older mattresses lose support

FOOD AND MEDICATION SAFETY

Access to healthy, nutritious food and the proper medication is critical to maintaining your loved one's well-being. Take some time to evaluate the contents of the pantry, refrigerator and cabinets.

- ☐ Throw out spoiled or expired medication or food
- ☐ Be sure to check with the local ordinances on the proper way to throw out expired medication
- ☐ Take some time to stock your loved one with replacement products, as needed. Consider meal prepping to help them.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF TECHNOLOGY

Home technology services have improved leaps and bounds over the years. From the ability to monitor who is at the door and turn on lights before you move to a room to medical alert systems, cell phones and smart watches, technology can help you be present – even if you’re not always local!

- ☐ Make sure your loved one has access to a cell phone or easily charged cordless phone
- ☐ Consider what smart technology products would make sense with you and your loved one’s lifestyle

