

Most Common At-Home Safety Risks for Seniors

1. Falls

Falls are by and large the leading cause of injury among adults 65 and older, and many of them take place in a person's own home. In fact, the National Safety Council reports that nearly a third of seniors experience a fall-related accident each year and that 70 percent of these falls happen at home. Because falls are the number one risk factor for the senior age group, older adults need to take extra safety precautions to account for physical changes of aging, such as declining hearing and vision, bone density loss, balance issues, and more. Some precautions you can take include:

- Remove tripping hazards such as clutter, small pieces of furniture, cords, rugs, and frayed carpet or tape down potential hazards.
- Provide enough walking space in all areas by rearranging furniture.
- Ensure all areas of the home can be well lit.
- Exercise and physical therapy to improve balance and strength.
- Wear non-slip footwear on smooth surfaces and always clean up spills as soon as they happen.
- Always use a cane or walker rather than holding onto furniture or walls.
- Make bathrooms safe by installing stability bars in showers and newa toilets, and by placing rubber mats in showers and on bathroom floors.
- Consider the use of a special aleram as a bracelet or necklace to alert medical services in the event of an emergency, especially if falls have happened before.

2. Fires

Fires are a risk in any home, and especially in homes where seniors may require the use of oxygen. To reduce the risk of a fire, always make sure there are smoke detectors with fresh batteries in the home, never let candles or fires burn in an empty room, avoid open flames or smoking near oxygen tanks, check appliances for frayed cords, and leave at least three feet of space between heaters and anything that can burn, such as clothes, furniture, or drapery.

3. Poisoning

Accidental poisoning can happen in several ways, and can be a particular risk to seniors who may have a lot of different medications. To avoid poisoning risks, install carbon monoxide detectors near all bedrooms, never heat a home with a stove or oven, avoid mixing cleaning products such as bleach or ammonia, keep medications organized and labeled in their original containers, take medications in a well lit room in order to read the labels, and ensure that medications or being used as directed.

4. Abuse and Crime

Older adults can be vulnerable targets to wrongdoers with ill intentions, even in their own home. Protect the home by enduring doors and windows have locks and never let strangers into the home, especially when a senior is by themselves. Families can also speak to their loved one to make sure they understand common forms of fraud that target the elderly and make sure they discuss any "offers" or "prizes" they may have discussed over the phone or in an email, or when a senior feels pressured into making a purchase or signing a contract.