HOME SAFETY FALL PREVENTION

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY DEPARTMENT

For more information about The Valley Hospital's Occupational Therapy Department, please call

Inpatient: 201-447-8671

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Some accidents can be prevented. By reviewing the following information and making a few changes, you can make your home safer and lower your chances of falling.

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HOME SAFETY CHECKLIST

- All rooms have proper lighting
- Night lights are well placed in bedrooms, hallways, and bathrooms
- Light switches are accessible at room entrances
- Throw rugs are removed or secured with non-skid padding
- Carpet edges are securely tacked down
- High gloss floor polish should be avoided
- Traffic lanes throughout the home are clear of clutter
- Electrical and phone cords are secured away from traffic lanes
- Frequently used kitchen items are stored at waist level
- Bathroom grab bars are installed for tub, toilet, and shower
- A rubber bath mat is used in the tub or shower
- Non-skid shoes are worn in the home
- Stairways and steps are in good condition
- A nearby neighbor or friend has a key to your home
- Emergency phone numbers are handy

Ambulance:

Physician:

Police:

Pharmacy:

Family:

Poison Control:
INFANTS AND YOUNG CHILDREN

Look at each room from a child’s eye level and use the following tips to protect young children in your home:

- Plastic wrapping or bags should be stored out of reach
- Check floors and low places for anything children may place in their mouths and choke on
- Always supervise your children when they are eating
- Install child safety locks on cabinets where you store chemicals, cleaners, and other toxic products
- Post the poison control center phone number (1-800-222-1222) and other emergency numbers next to every phone
- Children should stay at least three feet away from the stove to prevent burns
- Store matches, lighters, candles, and other fire tools out of children’s sight and reach, preferably in a locked cabinet
- Keep appliances and cords away from table and counter edges
- Avoid using tablecloths that can be pulled down
- Locate cribs, beds, chairs, and other furniture away from windows
- Install window locks or safety guards on above-ground windows
- Always supervise children around water

Safety products are available to ensure a safer environment for your children.

BATHROOM SAFETY

- Professionally install grab bars in shower, tub, and toilet
- Do not use sink, towel rack, toilet paper holder or soap dish as a grab bar as they are not intended to support weight
- Use a shower chair or tub bench to ensure your safety
- Use a hand-held shower head
- Use a raised toilet seat or commode to assist in lowering onto or rising up from the toilet
- Use an automatic night light
- Always use a non-skid bathtub/shower mat
- Wipe up spills and wet spots immediately
- Avoid bath oils and lotions as they make the surface slippery
- Wear rubber soled “water shoes” in tub and shower

KITCHEN SAFETY

- Avoid high-gloss floor waxes
- Wipe up spills immediately
- Do not wear socks or cloth slippers on uncarpeted floors
- Shoes/slippers should be non-skid and support your heel
- Open toe flip-flops and high-heeled shoes are not advisable
- Place a non-skid floor mat next to the sink to absorb water
- Store frequently used items at waist level
  - Use a reacher or ask for help to reach items above and below normal reach
  - Use a stepstool with a wide base of support if you need to reach for items above shoulder level
  - Never stand on chairs with wheels or boxes as they may be a risk for sliding or tilting over
BEDROOM SAFETY
- Do not get out of bed too quickly
- Always sit on the edge of the bed and get your balance before coming up to stand and/or walking
- Avoid wearing long nightclothes, robes, and floppy slippers
- Avoid walking with socks on uncarpeted floors
- Store slippers, books, and bedding neatly and out of pathway
- Avoid obstacles and clutter
- Use proper lighting and keep a lamp within reach of the bed
- Place automatic night lights along the route from the bedroom to the bathroom
- Place a telephone near the bed

SMOKING
- Avoid smoking around someone who is on oxygen
- Keep matches and lighters out of reach from children
- If someone in your home smokes, use big deep dish ashtrays and wet the butts before discarding

COOKING
- When cooking, keep pot handles turned inward to avoid knocking them off the stove
- If grease catches on fire, put a lid over the flames and turn the burner off. Never throw water on grease fires!

If there is a medical emergency, call 911!!

MEDICATION
- Have your doctor or pharmacist review all medicines you take, even over-the-counter medicines
- Be aware of side effects such as grogginess, dizziness, poor coordination, and disorientation which increase the risk of falls
- Consider a medication dispenser to assure the correct dose is being administered
- Keep a log of your current medication use in your purse or wallet

VISION
- Have your eyes checked by an eye doctor at least once a year. You may be wearing the wrong glasses or have a condition that limits your vision. Poor vision can increase your chances of falling
- Clean your glasses daily

LIVING ROOM AND DINING ROOM
- Keep a cordless phone in your pocket
- Secure all carpet edges
- Remove throw rugs and scatter rugs
- Use rugs with non-slip backing or purchase non-skid backing to apply to your existing rugs
- Avoid high-gloss polish on wood floors
- Have light switches at the entrance to each room
- Ask for help to change light bulbs in ceiling fixtures
- Consider purchasing long life fluorescent light bulbs
**FIRE SAFETY**

**GENERAL**
- Plan how you and everyone else would get out of the house in case of fire and practice your plan
- Store flammable materials and electrical cords away from heat sources
- Unplug any appliance or equipment that smokes or smells like it is burning
- Check cords and wires regularly. If frayed, broken, or brittle, replace them
- Do not put cords or wires under rugs or tie in knots
- Extension cords should be used for temporary use only
- Do not overload outlets
- Use grounded outlets or use an adapter that has a wire which attaches to the screw in your outlet

**EQUIPMENT**
- Use smoke detectors and place them outside the bedroom and at least one on each floor of your home—change the batteries at least once a year
- Space heaters should be at least 36 inches from objects including walls, furniture, curtains or clothing to prevent fires
- Install a carbon monoxide detector
- Keep a fire extinguisher in your residence

**STAIRWAYS/HALLWAYS**
- Ensure proper lighting
- Use reflective tape or bright contrasting paint to highlight the first and last step of each stairway
- Securely tack down carpeting on each step
- Use non-slip stair treads on uncarpeted steps
- Install bars on banisters on each side of stairway
- Repair cracked or broken steps on outdoor stairway
- Always take your time when using stairs
  
  *Avoid obstacles and clutter in walkways*

**OUTSIDE OF YOUR HOME**
- Watch for slippery surfaces in public places
- Be prepared for bright sunlight or dark hallways
- Allow time for eyes to adjust to changes in lighting before walking in or out of rooms
- Clear pathways around your home and garden
- Repair broken sidewalk and driveway surfaces
- Ask for help when carrying heavy items or use a cart with wheels
- Keep grassy areas trimmed
- Be aware of exposed tree roots

**WEATHER**

*If unsure about weather condition, stay indoors.*
- Take small steps, walk slowly, and avoid sudden turns
- Wear low-heeled, rubber-soled boots with good treads for traction
- Do not carry too many packages at once
PROPER BODY MECHANICS

Falls often occur during normal daily activities such as reaching, lifting, carrying, and dressing. It is important to be aware of the proper way to use our bodies efficiently and safely in order to prevent falls and other injuries.

LIFTING AND CARRYING
- Hold heavy objects close to the body
- Get a firm grip
- Plan where your object is going before you lift it
- Lift carefully and walk slowly
- Do not allow objects to block your view
- Divide heavy loads
- Make more than one trip if necessary
- Ask for help when you need it

REACHING, CLIMBING, AND BENDING
- Never stand on chairs
- Use a stepstool with a wide base of support for stability
- Use a reacher for objects that are located very high or low
- Place frequently used items at waist level
- Bend at your knees and not at your waist

ENERGY CONSERVATION

- PLAN
- PACE
- ORGANIZE

- Take plenty of time to complete tasks
- Plan ahead to avoid repetition and to eliminate unnecessary work
- Gather all tools needed to complete tasks before beginning
- Organize your work center
- Alternate heavy work and easy tasks throughout the day
- Store all equipment needed for similar tasks in close proximity
- Complete harder tasks over several days
- Work in a well ventilated and well lighted area
- Stop and rest when you become fatigued and short of breath

WORK SIMPLIFICATION

- Sit instead of stand
- Push or pull items instead of lifting
- Work at correct counter height to eliminate hunching over
- Eliminate all unnecessary bending, stooping, and reaching
- Use both hands when possible

Adaptive equipment and durable medical equipment are available to make daily skills safer and easier. Contact the Occupational Therapy Department for further information at 201-447-8671.