

Winter home hazards checklist



As the days get colder and darker, the chance of falls increases.

According to the NHS, around 1 in 3 adults over 65 will fall each year, a figure which rises to 1 in 2 for those over 80.

Falling isn't just one of those things that has to happen as we get older though. There are things that you can do to help mitigate yours or a loved one's risk of falling at home. Our Winter Home Hazard Checklist contains tips and advice from our team of Occupational Therapists to help reduce the risk of falls this winter. You can either use to the assess your own risk or the help assess the risk of a parent or the person you're caring for and make any necessary changes.

1: Are the walkways clear of tripping hazards?

Removing clutter from their walkways is an easy win in reducing their falling risk.

- Remove loose rugs and mats
- Make sure cables and extension cables aren't crossing their pathways and are tidied away
- Remove clutter from ground level e.g. books, piles of mail, scattered shoes

2: Do they use mobility equipment?

Mobility aids are a great support to help someone get around more easily, but if the environment isn't set up correctly, they could quickly become an inadvertent hazard.

- Make sure mobility equipment is placed within reach of them when they're sitting in a chair or in bed
- Double-check that the handle height of any mobility aid is set to the correct height for the person using it
- Check if there's enough room to manoeuvre equipment through tighter spaces – if they have a wheeled mobility aid does it catch on anything?

3: Is there adequate lighting?

It sounds obvious but being able to see clearly where they're going is really important.

- Check if there's a lamp close to hand that can be turned on without them having to get up in a darkened room
- Make sure dark hallways/corridors have a sufficient light:
 - Are all the bulbs working?
 - Check if they are energy efficient bulbs that need time to 'warm up' – these may need to be swapped for LED bulbs, where possible
- Consider getting motion sensor lighting as this can be used anywhere in the home, lighting their way when they need it most

4: Are they getting up regularly?

Keeping mobile is important in helping them to reduce their risk of falls.

- Encourage them to get up at regular intervals, this could be to make a drink, prepare food, or going to the toilet (they could try an activity tracker to remind them to move regularly or even use their mobile phone (if they have one) to set reminders)

5: Are they up to date with their eyesight checks?

Poor vision will make it more likely that they'll miss potential obstacles in their path. We should all be getting our eyes tested at least once every two years.

- If they are unsure of when their last appointment was, or have noticed a change in their eyesight, book an appointment with their optician for a check-up

6: Have they been having regular falls?

Regular falls could be a sign of an undiagnosed medical condition or an issue with their medication.

- Book an appointment with their GP for a check-up and to discuss their recent falls and possible cause
- Have they had a medication review recently? If not, request one with their GP to check what they're taking and see if anything needs to be changed

7: Are they finding it difficult standing while carrying out tasks?

An inability to stand for long periods of time could leave them liable to fall when trying to go about their daily routine.

- Using a perching stool when making a cup of tea or preparing food can give them a surface to perch on, saving them from standing for periods of time
- Using a shower stool/seat while showering or washing helps reduce the amount of time they need to spend stood up and so reduces their risk of falling in the shower

8: Are they concerned about dropping things when carrying them from one room to another?

If they're feeling unsteady on their feet, then carrying things from one room to another may feel like a daunting task.

- A trolley can help them with transporting things such as a drink or meals from one room to another
- If they use a wheeled walking frame, why not add a caddy so they can carry items with them?

9: Are they getting up in the night?

Tiredness and poor lighting could increase their risk of falling.

- Motion lights can help light up dark spaces, they can be used on bed frames, walls, or plug into mains sockets, shining a light right when they need it most
- Using a bed lever can help support them while getting in and out of bed

10: Are they worried about falling when walking around the house/garden?

General anxieties around falling can be hard to overcome, but there are things that can help.

- Check that they're wearing suitable footwear for the environment or conditions they're in (e.g. non-slip slippers or outdoor shoes)
- A fall detector can help reassure them that help can be at hand with the push of a button or if the device senses a drop in gravity
- A pendant alarm system can notify family, friends, or carers in the home at the push of a button

Where to turn for support



If you're concerned about a loved one falling, encourage them to speak with their GP who can offer advice and check them over to make sure that they're doing well.

Alternatively, if you would like extra support in helping to identify ways to help your loved one remain independent and in their own home for longer, book a Home Living Consultation with one of our Occupational Therapists. You can [find out more about our Home Living Consultation Service here.](#)

Resources

<https://cks.nice.org.uk/topics/falls-risk-assessment/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/falls/>

