“FALL-PROOFING” CHECKLIST

DATE: June 2011

Home safety is an important area of concern for families. Preventing falls and other accidents means that the resident can remain at home longer and maintain a greater level of independence.

The Home Safety Check:

Start with this “Fall-Proofing” Checklist. Although you may complete this checklist all at once, there is no requirement to do so. Look over the broad categories and concentrate on the area that is in immediate need of attention. Then move to other areas as seems appropriate.

After “fall-proofing” your home, get a copy of the following home safety checklist which covers all other aspects of home safety:


Again, look over the categories and concentrate on areas that med immediate attention; then move on to the other areas.

Check the safety of the home at least every six months; recheck any time one of these safety areas seems out of balance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“FALL-PROOFING” CHECKLIST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Osteoporosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>Are you getting sufficient daily calcium?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-menopausal women need 1,500 mg of calcium daily. Men over 50 need 1,200 mg per day.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Calcium-rich foods include milk, yogurt, cheese, fish and shellfish, selected vegetables such as broccoli, soybeans, collards and turnip greens, tofu and almonds.</td>
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<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>Are you getting sufficient vitamin D?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>For men and women over 50 need between 400 IU and 600 IU daily.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vitamin D is formed naturally in the body after exposure to sunlight, but some older adults may need a supplement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>Do you have a routine of weight bearing exercise?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suggestions: Lifting books, walking, climbing stairs. Use light exercise bands, hand-held weights, or weights that slip around wrist or ankle.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Note: Check with the doctor before beginning a weight routine]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>Do you know your bone density?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Physical Activity

- [ ] Do you maintain a regular exercise routine with steady movement (every day for about 15 minutes, every other day for 30 minutes a day)?
- [ ] Do you put balancing exercises into your routine (standing on one foot, Tai Chi)?
- [ ] Do you reach or bend for things in a safe manner?
- [ ] A stable step stool with a handrail is easily accessible for reaching high items.
- [ ] Do you know the proper way to fall and how to recover after a fall?
- [ ] Do you know how to rise out of a chair or bed safely for your physical capabilities?
- [ ] Always take time to gain your balance as you rise and before you begin moving.

### Impaired Vision

- [ ] Have you had an eye exam within the last 2 years? If no, make an appointment.
- [ ] Do you have annual checkups with the optometrist to glaucoma or cataracts?
- [ ] If you wear eyeglasses, do you clean them often?
- [ ] Are you wearing your eyeglasses or contact lenses as prescribed?
- [ ] Add contrasting color strips to first and last steps to identify change of level.

### Lighting

- [ ] A flashlight is within reach of the bed in case of a power outage.
- [ ] Turn on the lights whenever you walk into a room.
- [ ] Open the curtains during the day to take advantage of natural sunlight.
- [ ] Walkways are especially well-lit or have additional lighting available.
- [ ] Light switches are located at both the top and bottom of the stairs.
- [ ] The light switch is located near the entryway into the house.
- [ ] The porch, entryway, and approach to the entryway are all well-illuminated.

### Impaired Hearing

- [ ] Sounds can alert you to hazards: stove buzzer, car horns, the pad of your pet’s walk]
- [ ] Have you had your hearing checked within the last 3 years?
- [ ] If you have hearing aids, do you wear them as directed?
- [ ] Have you added a bell to your pet’s collar so you can hear where the pet is?

### Medications

- [ ] Know the common side effects of all medications you are taking.
Know the interactions of all the medications you are taking. If no, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

Talk with a physician or pharmacist about ways to reduce the chances of falling by:
- Using the lowest effective dosage
- Regularly assessing the need for continued medication; and
- The need for walking aids while taking medications that affect balance.

Remove all out-of-date medications and those no longer in use.
[See website at end of checklist for instructions on safe disposal of medications]

Limit intake of alcohol as it may interact with medications

**Environmental Hazards**

- **Inside the Home**

  All walking surfaces are free of electrical cords, boxes, furniture, appliances, and other objects that could pose a tripping hazard, especially in the event of an emergency or fire.

  All flooring is in good condition, is flat and uniform, and is slip-resistant or is covered with slip-resistant carpeting, rugs, mats, or similar materials.

  All steps are in good condition, have flat, even surfaces and are free of objects that could pose a tripping hazard.

  All stair treads are in good condition, and have slip-resistant surfaces such as dense, low-pile carpeting or slip-resistant strips that are securely attached to the steps.

  All stairs have solidly mounted handrails that run continuously along the full length of the stairs on both sides. Handrails are easily grasppable.

  All clutter has been picked up off the floor.

  All electrical, extension, and telephone cords are out of the flow of foot traffic since they pose a tripping hazard.

  Use color and contrast to define balance-aiding objects in the home (e.g., grab bars and handrails).

  All bathtubs and showers are equipped with non-skid mats, abrasive strips, or surfaces that are not slippery and have at least one secure and easily graspable grab bar.

  The bathroom floor is slip-resistant or is covered with secure slip-resistant materials.

  A telephone is within reach of the bed in case of an emergency.

- **Outside the Home**

  You are very mindful of where you’re walking when moving out and about. You slow down.
### Fall-Proofing Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Uneven walking surfaces, like uneven pavement, cracks and sidewalk potholes can be treacherous. Make sure that all the walks and driveway at the house are in good repair</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outside steps, entryways, and approaches to the entryway are in good condition and are slip-resistant.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outside steps have handrails that are easily graspable.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Take care when walking in snow and ice. Wear proper shoes for inclement weather and keep a bag of kitty litter in the car to take care of slippery spots.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dress Correctly</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wear low-heeled shoes with rubber soles.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Avoid leather soles and scuffy slippers.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Obtain protective gear available to protect hips and limbs when you do fall. Elbow and knee pads that are used for roller blading or skateboarding are good.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Make sure that clothes fit properly. Shorten pant cuffs over which you might trip. Keep sleeves the proper length so that you can get a good grip on a handrail, walker or cane. Trousers that are too baggy can impede your progress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use shoulder bags, waistpacks and small backpacks keep both hands free to assist in balance and for gripping.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Other Sources of Information

This checklist has been compiled from several sources, and I’m especially indebted to those who created the following lists:

[http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/duip/preventadultfalls.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/duip/preventadultfalls.htm)

[http://www.nursing.wright.edu/practice/falls/](http://www.nursing.wright.edu/practice/falls/)

[http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/consumer/10242.html#top](http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/consumer/10242.html#top)
Removal of Medications

Flushing medication down the toilet or throwing pills in the trash is no longer recommended. Consult the following suggestions from the FDA on disposing out-of-date and unused medications: