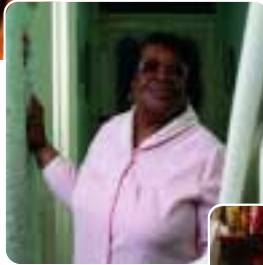


Step up to safety



Information for older people on
how to use the stairs safely

Every year over a million people suffer a non-fatal injury when they fall in the home, with nearly a third of these falls happening on the stairs. Some of those who fall, especially older people, will lose their confidence, be badly injured and may often experience long-term loss of independence as a result.

Keep using the stairs. The exercise is good for you.

This leaflet is designed to give practical advice and simple steps that you can take to reduce the risk of falling on stairs.

You might find it helpful to use the ten top tips as a list to check that your own stairs are safe.

Why not use the booklet with a family member or discuss it with a carer as you plan to make your stairs safer?

TEN TOP TIPS FOR SAFETY ON THE STAIRS

TIP
1

Light up your stairs

TIP
2

Take care when carrying things up and down stairs

TIP
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Take care when cleaning

TIP
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Keep stairs and landings clear from clutter

TIP
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See your stairs

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More haste....less speed

TIP
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Stay steady

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9

Hold the handrail

TIP
10

Keep using the stairs

TEN TOP TIPS FOR SAFETY ON THE STAIRS



Light up your stairs

- Use the highest wattage light bulbs your light fitting allows – using long-life bulbs will save money over time and they don't need changing so often.
- Change lampshades to plain, pale colours which let out as much light as possible.
- Change stair walls to plain pale colours so that more light is reflected.
- Always switch the light on when you use the stairs at night.
- Have a switch at the top and the bottom of the stairs.



TIP

2

Take care when carrying things up and down stairs

- If you are carrying something and cannot use the handrail or see the steps, you may feel 'off balance'. It's much safer to make two journeys.
- Don't carry things that are too heavy or bulky – ask someone else to carry them for you.
- Take care if you have pets, you may not always see them on your stairs.



TIP

3

Take care when cleaning

- Be extra careful when vacuuming the stairs. Watch out for wires and pipes that might trip you up.
- Ask for help with this task if you need it.
- Consider using a hand-held cordless vacuum or dustpan and brush.

TICK



TICK



TIP

4

Keep stairs and landings clear from clutter

- Find a safe place to leave things that need to be taken upstairs.
- Loose rugs on landings and at the top and bottom of the stairs can trip you up. Fix them down or better still remove them.
- Remove furniture from half landings, and the top and bottom of the stairs.



TICK



TIP

5

See your stairs

- Take extra care if you use bifocal glasses. You might find it better to use separate glasses for reading and distance. Financial help may be available – ask your optician.
- If you wear glasses during the day, put them on if you get up at night.
- Have an eye test at least every 2 years; these are free for those over 60.



TICK



TIP

6

Consider your carpet

- The pattern on your stair carpet can make steps hard to see – edge each one with heavy duty tape of a contrasting colour. Ensure it remains well stuck down.
- Worn, loose or frayed carpet increases the risk of tripping. Have it repaired or replaced.
- If you are choosing a new carpet, try and choose one that is a lighter colour, and plain rather than patterned.

TICK



TIP

7

More haste...less speed

- Avoid having to rush or hurry on the stairs – the phone can wait! Remember that many telephone companies provide a 'last number' service free of charge so you can check who was calling.
- Have an intercom fitted upstairs so you don't have to rush to answer the door.
- Take extra time when using unfamiliar stairs.



TICK



TIP

8

Stay steady

- Mixing alcohol and medications can cause dizziness and loss of balance. Let your GP or nurse know if any of your medicines make you dizzy.
- Be careful of long and trailing clothes, which might trip you up.
- Wear enclosed, thin soled or flat shoes or slippers.

TICK



TIP

9

Hold the handrail

- Get into the habit of using the handrail every time you use the stairs.
- Consider having a second handrail fitted so you can hold on easily either coming up or going down stairs. Make sure it fits comfortably into the grip of your hand.

TICK



TIP

10

Keep using the stairs

The exercise will help to maintain your muscle strength, your balance and co-ordination.

TICK



PEOPLE WHO CAN HELP YOU

Contact your GP for general health advice and if your medications make you dizzy. Take the medicines with you when asking your chemist for advice.

National Co-ordinating body for Home Improvement Agencies **Telephone 01457 891 909**

Calls are charged at national rate.

A national number for local advice and support about home adaptations.

Occupational therapy

Look in the telephone directory under 'Social services' to find the local number.

An occupational therapist can discuss with you any home adaptations that might be helpful.

NHS Direct

Telephone 0845 4647

Calls are charged at local rate.

Twenty-four hour access to information and advice about health, illness and health services.

Help the Aged-Senior Line

Freephone 0808 8006565

Open Monday to Friday from 9.00am to 4.00pm.

A free national advice service for older people and their carers.

They can give you advice on welfare and disability rights, housing and community care.



Age Concern Information Line

Freephone 0800 009966

Open seven days a week from 7.00am to 7.00pm.

A free helpline for older people and their carers who want information on issues such as money, health, community care, housing, transport, heating and education.

Local authority

Your local council's telephone number can be found in the phone book.

Contact them for advice on home adaptations and information on local services.

Disabled Living Foundation

Telephone 0870 6039177 or

Minicom 0870 6039176

for the deaf and hard of hearing.

Calls are charged at 8p per minute.

Open Monday to Friday from
10.00am to 4.00pm.

For advice and information about
equipment for daily living.

Disability Benefits Helpline

Freephone 0800 882200

For advice and information about benefits for people
with disabilities and their carers.



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FOR LOCAL INFORMATION CONTACT:

