

Fall Prevention: Solutions for Your Home¹

Emily Beardsley, Leigh Nova, Linda B. Bobroff, and Wendy W. Lynch²

One in three adults aged 65 and older experience a fall each year. 60% of falls occur in the home. There are changes you can make to reduce your personal fall risk while meeting your personal needs. Below is a list of possible hazards in your home and modifications that can be made for your safety.

Limited Reach

High shelves in the kitchen, closets, and other storage areas can be harder to reach. Lower shelves three inches from their standard height for easier access.

Trying to reach high closet rods can be dangerous. Use height-adjustable closet rods to keep your clothes within reach. If you must use a step stool, use one that has a bar to hold on to. Never use a chair as a step stool. If you need to extend your reach, use an assistive device such as a “reacher” or a grabber.

You can find examples of assistive devices online (see *Get More Information*). You can also reach out to an occupational therapist for recommendations.

Install a peephole in the front door at the right height for you. This will allow you to see out without the hazard of trying to balance on your tiptoes.



Figure 1. Only use shelves that you can easily reach to avoid the need for a step stool or ladder.

Credits: Teena Cobb/Pixabay.com

Limited Vision

Unless you have perfect vision, wear your glasses when moving around the house.

Small numbers on telephones can be difficult to read. If you are disoriented from a fall, it can be especially hard to see the numbers. Purchase a telephone with a large number keypad and keep at least one phone at a low level for easy reach if you do fall. Also, keep a list of emergency numbers by the phone printed in large font. If you use a cell phone, create emergency contacts that can be autodialed easily.

1. This document is FCS2228 (la versión en español de este documento es *Prevención de Caídas: Soluciones para su hogar* (FCS2228-Span)), one of a series of the Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date April 2005. Revised March 2010, November 2014, January 2018, December 2022, and September 2024. Visit the EDIS website at <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu> for the currently supported version of this publication.
2. Emily Beardsley, BS, former ENAFS program coordinator; Leigh Nova, MESS, RN, PA, former ENAFS program coordinator; Linda B. Bobroff, PhD, RDN, professor emeritus, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences; and Wendy W. Lynch, regional specialized agent, UF/IFAS Extension Central District, and Extension agent, family and consumer sciences/food systems, UF/IFAS Extension St. Johns County; UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is an Equal Opportunity Institution authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function with non-discrimination with respect to race, creed, color, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations. For more information on obtaining other UF/IFAS Extension publications, contact your county's UF/IFAS Extension office. U.S. Department of Agriculture, UF/IFAS Extension Service, University of Florida, IFAS, Florida A & M University Cooperative Extension Program, and Boards of County Commissioners Cooperating. Andra Johnson, dean for UF/IFAS Extension.

Dim lighting in your house can be dangerous. Increase the wattage of your light bulbs to brighten your rooms and allow you to easily see obstacles in your path. It is also a good idea to install overhead lights and night lights near walkways, stairs, and entrances. Keep a lamp next to your bedside for easy access to light during the evening.



Figure 2. Have a peephole at the right height for you. This will keep you from using a step stool or standing on tiptoes, both of which can be fall hazards.

Credits: iStock/Thinkstock.com



Figure 3. Dimly lit rooms like this one can increase fall risk. Brighten up your home with higher-wattage light bulbs and overhead lighting if possible.

Credits: Hemera/Thinkstock.com

Hearing Impairments

In case of a fire, it is important that you can get out of your house safely and quickly. If you have a hearing impairment, buy smoke detectors with strobe lights.

Be sure you can hear the doorbell throughout your house. If you can hear the doorbell on the first ring, there will be no need to rush, which can increase your risk of falling.

Limited Flexibility or Lifting Ability

Some handles on cabinets and drawers are not easy to grip. Choosing u-shaped or d-shaped handles will allow you to grasp handles more easily.

Install single-lever faucets in your kitchen and bathroom. They are easier to adjust than hot and cold-water knobs.



Figure 4. Single-lever faucets are easier to adjust than hot and cold water knobs.

Credits: iStock/Thinkstock.com

Limited Mobility

Going up and down stairs is one of the leading causes of falls among older adults. Be sure to use the handrails on both sides of the stairs.

Use reflective tape to mark changes in flooring levels.

Throw rugs can slip easily, especially on tile and wood floors. Remove rugs or secure them with a nonstick rug runner between the floor and the rug; double-sided tape can also be used.

Older adults often have a harder time showering as they age. Have a handheld showerhead installed and sit on a bath bench or chair while showering.

Install grab bars to help you get in and out of the bathtub safely. This will reduce your risk of slipping and falling.

Use a walker or wheelchair in your home as well as outside if you are unsteady on your feet.

Patios, driveways, and stairs can be difficult to walk on, especially when wet. Use textured surfaces for these areas to increase your stability. Keep these areas clear of leaves and other debris that can increase risk of slipping or tripping.

Get More Information

Your local UF/IFAS Extension Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) agent may have more written information. Look for “Cooperative Extension Service” in the government pages of your telephone book or search online; in Florida, find your local UF/IFAS Extension office at <https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/find-your-local-office/>.

Other reliable websites include:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <https://www.cdc.gov/steady/patient-resources/index.html>
- National Council on Aging/Center for Healthy Aging <https://www.ncoa.org/older-adults/health/prevention/falls-prevention/>
- Department of Health and Human Services/Administration on Aging <https://www.hhs.gov/aging/index.html>
- Assistive Devices—Medline Plus <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/assistivedevices.html>
- National Institutes of Health <https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/rehabtech/conditioninfo/device>