

Fall Hazards Home Safety Checklist

You can help prevent falls after you leave the hospital by:

- Learning more about your medications and how they interact. Some medicines can make you drowsy or light-headed, which may lead to falls.
- Wearing slippers and shoes with non-skid soles when walking.
- Having your vision checked and using prescribed glasses/lenses. Impaired sight can increase your chance of falling.
- Talking with your doctor about an exercise program to improve your strength, coordination and flexibility.
- Taking steps to make your living areas safer.

This is a room-by-room checklist that highlights possible fall hazards in your home. If you check off any of these questions, consider the suggestions to help reduce your chances of falling.

Bathroom

- Is the path from the bedroom to the bathroom dark?
 - Nightlights can be helpful in lighting the path.
- Are towel racks used to balance or grab onto while getting into or out of the bathtub/shower?
 - Towel racks may not be mounted well enough to support a person's weight.
 - Install grab bars that will support your weight.
- Do you need more support when getting into or out of the shower or tub?
 - Install grab bars inside your shower or tub.
- Is it difficult to stand during a shower?
 - A shower seat allows you to shower without getting tired or risking a fall because of dizziness.
- Is the shower floor and/or bathtub slippery?
 - Install non-skid strips or a non-slip mat.
- Is there any water on the floor after a bath/shower? Are there leaks from the tub/shower?
 - Patch leaks with caulk or other appropriate materials.
 - Wipe up water immediately to prevent slipping.
 - Use a bath mat with a slip resistant backing.

- Do you need to reach far or turn around to get towels, shampoo and soap?
 - A shower/bath storage unit that attaches to the side of the tub or shower wall will keep your supplies close by and easy to reach.
- Is it difficult to get on and off the toilet?
 - Use a raised toilet seat.
 - Install handrails near the toilet to help you.

Bedroom

- Is there a long reach from the bed to a light?
 - Move a lamp closer to the bed within reach or attach a light to the headboard to reduce the chances of falling.
- Is it necessary to get out of bed to reach the telephone or glasses?
 - Use a longer phone cord, cordless, or cell phone within easy reach of the bed.
 - Store glasses close by within reach.
- Are there telephone, light, or TV cords running along the floor on walkways?
 - Cords are a tripping hazard.
 - Reroute cords so they do not cross walking paths and/or get an electrician to install more outlets.
- Is there clutter (such as clothes, shoes, books) on the floor?
 - Remove clutter from walkways to reduce the chances of tripping over it.
- Is it common to get up many times during the night to use the bathroom?
 - Consider using a portable commode near the bed to eliminate nighttime trips to the bathroom.

Kitchen

- Are there loose floor mats or rugs in the kitchen?
 - Remove loose floor mats or rugs.
- Is it necessary to reach far, bend over, or climb on a stool to get commonly used kitchen items or foods?
 - Rearrange cupboards and drawers so the items that you use the most are kept in waist high spaces.
 - Use a sturdy step stool with a grab bar to reach items stored overhead.
 - Do not use a chair as a step stool.

- Is there liquid, food, grease, or other clutter on the floor?
 - Keep floor surfaces clean and dry.
 - Sweep often.
 - Wipe up spills right away to reduce the chances of slipping.

Living Areas

- Do carpets, rugs, and floor coverings have frayed corners or rolled-up edges?
 - Remove damaged floor coverings or secure them well with double-sided tape or nails. It is important to have a flat, sturdy walkway for safety.
- Are there throw rugs in the walkways?
 - For your safety, remove loose throw rugs.
- Are chairs or couches low to the ground?
 - Higher seats and armrests are easiest to get into and out of from a sitting position.
- Is it necessary to get up to answer the phone?
 - Keep a phone nearby so you don't have to get up quickly if it rings.
 - Cordless phones can be kept nearby.
 - Attach your cellphone to a lanyard or always keep your cell phone in your pocket so it is handy at all times, even if you fall.
- Do you have to walk over or around electrical cords or wires?
 - Cords are a tripping hazard. Reroute cords so they do not cross walking paths and/or get an electrician to install additional outlets.
- Are there newspapers, boxes, shoes, or clutter on the floor?
 - Remove clutter from walkways to avoid tripping.
- Do you need to walk around furniture to get through the living area?
 - Rearrange furniture to allow a clear, straight path for walking through rooms.
- Are you often alone?
 - Consider wearing an alarm device that will alert help in case of a fall or emergency.
 - Or attach your cellphone to a lanyard or always keep your cell phone in your pocket so it is handy at all times, even if you fall.
- Do you have to reach up to pull cords to lights or ceiling fans?
 - Install longer cords or link ceiling fans/lights to a light switch on the wall so you don't have to reach.

Stairs

- Are any steps broken or uneven?
 - Fix all loose or broken steps.
- Is carpet on steps loose or torn?
 - Carpet should be firmly attached to every step. Remove or reattach carpet that is loose or torn.
- Are the handrails loose or broken? Is the handrail on only one side of the stairs?
 - Repair loose handrails. For safety, handrails should be on both sides of the stairs for the full length of the stairway.

Before You Leave the Hospital

Equipment may be purchased from a medical/surgical supply store, your local pharmacy, or a hardware store. If the equipment is too expensive, ask your healthcare provider for other options.

Watch the video, “**Fall Prevention in the Hospital and at Home**” while you are in the hospital. Use the bedside phone to dial 6-2585. Follow the prompts to enter the order number “283.” Then turn to the assigned viewing channel.

If you have any questions or concerns, ask your healthcare provider.

Northwestern Medicine – Health Information Resources

For more information, contact Northwestern Memorial Hospital’s Alberto Culver Health Learning Center (HLC) at hlc@nm.org, or by calling 312.926.5465. You may also visit the HLC on the 3rd floor, Galter Pavilion at 251 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL. Health information professionals can help you find the information you need and provide you with personal support at no charge.

For more information about Northwestern Medicine, please visit our website at nm.org.

Para asistencia en español, por favor llamar al Departamento de Representantes para Pacientes al 312.926.3112.

The entities that come together as Northwestern Medicine are committed to representing the communities we serve, fostering a culture of inclusion, delivering culturally competent care, providing access to treatment and programs in a nondiscriminatory manner and eliminating healthcare disparities. For questions, please call either Northwestern Memorial Hospital’s Patient Representatives Department at 312.926.3112, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363, the Northwestern Lake Forest Patient Relations manager at 847.535.8282 and/or the Northwestern Medical Group Patient Representatives Department at 312.695.1100, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363.

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