



Harpswell Aging at Home
PO Box 25
Harpswell, ME 04079

www.hah.community
hah@hah.community

Tip Sheet for Safety at Home

Lighting

1. Place **bed side lamps** within an arm's reach.
2. **Add extra lights** from the bathroom to the bedroom, such as night lights in dark hallways or corners. **Turn on lights** before using stairways.

Flooring

1. Use double-sided tape or grip tape to **secure rugs to the floor** and prevent tripping hazards. Always **smooth out wrinkles and folds** in carpeting.

Furniture

1. **Use chairs with armrests and high backs** when possible for extra support.
2. **Arrange furniture** to allow for larger pathways throughout your home.
3. **Limit accumulations** of paper, books, towels, shoes, magazines, boxes, bags, blankets, or other objects on the floor to prevent tripping.
4. **Do not use a step stool**; ask a family member or friend to help you reach items placed high, and relocate items lower, within reach without using a stool.
5. Place an **"entrance station"** next to your front door. If you are carrying items such as groceries inside; a table, planter or bench used to sit items on will help you safely open the door.

Kitchen

1. **Do not clean floors with high-gloss polish or wax.** This can help prevent a fall.
2. **Stay in the kitchen** when boiling water, grilling, frying, or broiling.
 - ◆ **If you have to leave the kitchen**, even for a short time, **turn off the burner** and **move the pan** to a cool burner.
 - ◆ **If a pan of food catches fire**, **slide a lid over it**, and **turn off the burner.**
 - ◆ **Do not cook** if you are **drowsy from alcohol or medication.**
 - ◆ **Do not cook** when taking **new medication** until you know how it affects you.
 - ◆ **Wear tight-fitting, rolled-up, or short sleeves** when cooking.
 - ◆ Use **light-weight, manageable pans** for cooking.
 - ◆ Use **oven mitts** to handle hot pans.

Bathroom

1. **Properly label all medications** to ensure the correct dosage.
2. **Use a non-slip bathmat** on your tub/shower floor and a secure rug to step out onto.
3. **Do not use towel bars for balance. Have grab bars installed** on walls next to tub, shower, and toilet.
4. **Wipe up spilled liquids** immediately.

Stairs

1. **Remove from stairs** all papers, books, shoes or other objects to prevent falls.
2. If there is a **light switch** only at the top or bottom of the stairwell, consider adding battery-powered or outlet night lights along the steps.
3. **Always use lights** when using stairways.
4. Make sure **handrails** are present and securely attached, both inside the home and at the entrance/exit.
5. **Always use handrails** when using stairways.

Fire Prevention

1. “Three feet from heat.” Keep **anything that can catch fire** at least **3 feet** from any type of heat source.
2. If you use **space heaters**, ensure they are for inside use, place them on a level, hard, nonflammable surface.
 - ◆ Keep **at least 3 feet away from anything that can burn** — bedding, drapes, furniture and other flammable materials.
 - ◆ Do not use **when sleeping** or close to any sleeping person.
 - ◆ **Shut off and unplug heaters** when you leave your home or go to bed.
 - ◆ Always **plug space heaters directly into a wall outlet**, never into an extension cord or power strip.
3. **Know your escape route** from each room in your home in case of fire. Consider installing escape ladders.
4. **In the event of a fire, get out of the house.** It is not worth your safety to try and put out a fire. If you do choose to keep a fire extinguisher, make sure it is an ABC type extinguisher.
5. **Install a smoke alarm and CO alarm** close to all sleeping areas and on every level of your home. Consider an alarm with a strobe light if you are hard of hearing. **Test each alarm** twice a year; at daylight saving time changes. **Never ignore a carbon monoxide alarm; get fresh air immediately.** Replace all alarms that are **10 years old** or older.
6. Before starting a fire in a **fireplace or stove**, check to be sure no flammable material is within 3 feet.
7. **If you smoke, smoke outside.** Never smoke in bed. Never smoke if oxygen is used in the home.

Preventing Falls

1. **Be mindful of medications:** 80% of falls are from medicines, or combinations of medicines, that have side effects like dizziness or drowsiness. Have only one medication provider, a doctor or pharmacist, review all your medications to help reduce the chance of risky side effects.
2. **Get some exercise:** Lack of exercise weakens legs, which increases the chance of falling. Exercise programs like Tai Chi increase strength and improve balance and coordination, making falls less likely for aging adults.
3. **Keep your vision sharp:** Poor vision makes it harder to get around safely. To help make sure you're seeing clearly, have your eyes checked every year, and wear glasses or contact lenses with the right prescription strength.
4. **Remove hazards at home:** About half of all falls happen at home. **Keep stairs and walking areas free** of electrical cords, shoes, clothing, books, magazines, and other treasures.
5. **Avoid rushing** to answer the phone or doorbell/knock; consider a portable phone, or make sure you have multiple phones within easy reach (living room, bedroom and kitchen).
6. **Get out of chairs slowly.** Sit a moment before getting out of your bed. Stand slowly and get your balance before you walk.
7. **Wear sturdy, well-fitting, low-heeled footwear** such as sneakers or a solid slipper with non-slip soles, and avoid wearing socks on tile/wood floors.
8. **Only do tasks that place yourself in danger when family members or friends are in home, available to help if needed.** Examples are showering, walking up attic stairs, starting a fireplace or woodstove fire.
9. **Have a flashlight readily available in each room,** especially living areas and bedrooms.
10. **Have a telephone on each level;** have a telephone **easily within reach of bed and in bathroom.**
11. **Have a list of emergency contact numbers** next to, or attached to, each telephone.