

Check Out This Home Safety Checklist

It's quite natural to think of your home as the safest place you can be. After all, that is where you escape the cares of the world and the pressures of work. However, many serious accidents happen at home. Painful injuries, permanent disability and even death can be the result of home accidents. Falls and fires are particular dangers at home.

Fortunately, there is much you can do to improve the safety in your home.

Start by following this home safety checklist:

- Is lighting adequate in all traffic areas, including sidewalks, entrance areas, basements and stairways?
- Are traffic areas free of clutter?
- Are stairways clear, with no items stored on them, even temporarily?
- Are there sturdy railings on all stairways, even in the basement and outdoors?
- Are stairs, steps and floors in good condition and free of tripping hazards such as torn carpet and loose tiles?
- Is there a non-slip surface on the floor of the shower and bathtub?
- Is your home protected by these safety devices: Smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, carbon monoxide detectors, Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters on electrical outlets in the bathroom and basement?
- Is all wiring in good condition? Is wiring adequate for the electrical appliances used in the house, including computer equipment?
- Are extension cords used only temporarily? Are they kept out of traffic areas?
- Are chimneys for wood burning stoves and fireplaces cleaned yearly?
- Are any flammable liquids such as gasoline and paint thinner

stored in approved covered containers, in well ventilated areas? Are they kept far away from sources of ignition, such as cigarettes and pilot lights?

- Are drawers and cabinet doors closed immediately after use to prevent tripping accidents and head injuries?
- Are the handles of pots and pans always turned toward the center of the stove, not the edge of the stove where they can be reached by children or accidentally contacted by someone passing by?
- Are knives stored safely in a knife holder or other device so someone will not accidentally touch the blade?
- Are glass doors marked at eye level to prevent someone from accidentally walking into them?
- Is the house safe for children, even if they only visit occasionally? Are all medicines and cleaning materials stored well out of reach of children? Are stairways barricaded so youngsters cannot fall down them? Are electrical outlets covered by child-proof plugs?
- Are emergency numbers posted at each telephone? Is the house address and telephone number posted there as well?
- Do you hold regular family fire drills? Does each member of the family know how to escape from his or her bedroom and where to meet outside?

If you find hazards while you are inspecting your home, correct them now. If they require expert help, such as rewiring by an electrician, arrange to have the work done. Then make a regular safety review part of your family's routine!