
HOME SAFETY ASSESSMENT Checklist



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Release from liability: Any modifications the individual or family makes to the home are the sole responsibility of the homeowner. The Financial Advisor, Legg Mason, and The Center for Innovative Care in Aging at the Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing are held harmless and released from any liability that may occur from making a home modification.

Home safety assessment

Checklist

As physical abilities change with age, it may become more difficult to manage at home safely.

Evaluating your home for its safety and whether it supports your ability to carry out everyday activities efficiently and safely is important.

This easy-to-use Home Safety Assessment Checklist provides a guide to the features of your home that may be unsafe for you as you age.

To use this checklist, walk through your home and consider each of the features listed. Also, use the checklist to help you develop a plan to modify your home to make it safer for you.

To learn about possible home modifications that can make your home safer, consider consulting with a health professional such as an occupational therapist.

Questions for financial advisors and clients about home safety:

- 1** How are you managing at home?
- 2** Are you able to do the things you want to do safely?
- 3** Would you consider making changes to your home to keep you independent and safe?

The first step is for you to evaluate whether your home is safe for you now. You can use this checklist and also seek a home evaluation from a health professional such as an occupational therapist.

In using this checklist, keep in mind the following points

- Some features of your home may be safe for you but not other members of your household.
- Some home modifications or changes you make may be beneficial to one person but may not be appropriate for another.
- If you have Medicare, you can ask your primary doctor for a prescription for a home safety evaluation from an occupational therapist who has the skills and knowledge to evaluate the safety of your home for you. You can also pay out of pocket for this consultation.
- Any home modifications you decided to make should be conducted by licensed and bonded contractors that are familiar with Universal Design principles.

Entry to the home

Lighting			
	Yes	No	If no, plan of action
Is there adequate lighting in the following areas?			
Driveway			
Garage			
Walkways			
At all doors			
Near the trash area			
Any other areas of the yard that are used after dark?			
Driveway			
Is the driveway smooth and evenly paved?			
Is the transition between the driveway and surrounding surfaces (such as the yard), smooth and even, free of ruts and other things (rocks) that could cause tripping?			
Is the slope of the driveway low enough that it does not cause a problem?			
Walkways to and around home			
Are walkways smooth and level (no cracks, gaps, or other tripping hazards)?			
Are steps along walkways clearly visible?			
Do they have handrails?			
Are transitions between different surfaces (a patio and sidewalk, concrete and asphalt, walkway and grass, etc.) even and level?			
If there are steeply inclined walkways, do they have sturdy, easy-to-grasp handrails?			
Are shrubs, bushes, and grass trimmed back or removed so that they do not infringe on or obstruct the walkway (potential tripping hazard)?			
Steps to the doors			
Do all steps (even single steps) have sturdy, easy-to-grasp (cylindrical) rails on both sides?			
Are the risers on stairs and multiple steps of equal height?			
Are the stair treads sturdy, level and in good condition?			

Garage

	Yes	No	If no, plan of action
Are there adequate overhead lights in the garage?			
Is there a clear pathway to walk through?			
Do entry stairs or ramps to the house have railings?			

Ramps (if applicable)

Is there adequate lighting in the following areas?

Are ramps rising at a minimum slope of 12:1 (12 inches of ramp length for every 1 inch of height is standard. However, 16:1 is recommended.)			
Do ramps have sturdy rails on both sides?			
Are the rails cylindrical for easy grasping?			
Do ramps have smooth transitions from ramp surface to ground surface?			
Do ramps have non-skid surfaces or have non-skid strips been added?			
Do ramp railings extend beyond the ramp to help people transition off the ramp?			
Do ramps have sufficient width of at least 36" between handrails?			

Entry porches/decks/landings

	Front		Rear		If no, plan of action
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Have all potential tripping hazards, such as clutter and overgrown bushes, been removed?					
Is the landing wide and deep enough to safely open the door?					
Is there a clearly visible, easily reachable doorbell?					
Do porches and decks have railings or barriers to prevent someone from stepping or falling off? (Are the railings securely fastened?)					
Does the decking have secure, even floorboards with no protruding nails?					
Is there a non-skid surface on the porch/deck/landing?					
Do doormats have non-skid backing with no upturned corners?					

Exterior doors

	Front		Rear		If no, plan of action
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
If necessary, are doorways wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs?					
Is a lock or deadbolt present on interior of door?					
Are locks in good working order and easy to use?					
Are latches and door handles in good condition and easy to use?					
If someone has trouble turning a doorknob, are there lever handles?					
Do the doors open and close easily without sticking?					
Do doors on springs close slowly enough (so they don't close on someone going through the door)?					
Is the threshold at the door less than one inch high?					
Do glass sliding doors have decals at eye level?					
Are the doors easy to open?					

Other outdoor area concerns

If there is a patio or deck, is it level, smoothly surfaced and free of tripping hazards?					
Are garbage and recycling areas well lit?					
Do these areas have safe, accessible stairs and railings?					
Have working chimneys been professionally inspected and cleaned within the last year?					

Inside the home

Entryways and vestibules

	Front		Rear		If no, plan of action
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Have throw rugs (potential tripping hazards) been removed?					
Is there a clear pathway (devoid of clutter) through the entry hall?					
Are all cords and wires out of the pathway?					
Are thresholds low enough (<1 inch) so someone does not trip over them?					
Is there adequate lighting?					
Is the light switch at the entrance to the room?					
If necessary, is the entryway wide enough for a wheelchair/walker?					

Hallways

	#1		#2		#3		If no, plan of action
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	
If people need support, are there handrails along the hall?							
Are halls free of clutter and other tripping obstacles?							
Are carpet runners tacked down or have anti-skid backing?							
Are thresholds less than one inch so they are not tripping hazards?							
If necessary, are halls wide enough for a wheelchair/walker?							
Is there adequate lighting?							
Is there a light switch at both ends of the hall?							

Doors/doorways

	Yes No		If no, plan of action
	Yes	No	
Do all doors open easily?			
Are thresholds less than one inch?			
Are latches and door handles in good condition and easy to use?			
If someone has trouble turning a doorknob, are there lever handles?			

Interior stairs

	2nd floor		Basement		Other		If no, plan of action
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Do stairs have sturdy rails on both sides that are securely fastened?							
Do rails continue onto the landings?							
Are the stair treads sturdy, not deteriorating or broken?							
Are edges of stair treads clearly visible (no dark, busy patterns)?							
Are stair pads in good repair (tacked down, in one piece)?							
(If bare wood) Are stair treads slip-resistant?							
(If carpeted) Is carpet securely attached, not worn/frayed?							
Are top and bottom steps highlighted?							
Are stairs free of clutter?							
If stairs have a low, overhanging beam that people could bump their heads on, has it been padded?							
Are stairs and landings well lit, with light switches at both top and bottom?							

Living room and dining room

	LR		DR		If no, plan of action
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Is the lighting adequate?					
Is there a light switch at the entrance to the room?					
Is there a clear, unobstructed path through the room (no clutter, cords, wires, baskets, and other things to trip over)?					
Are thresholds minimal and carpet binders tacked down?					
Are carpets in good condition (not frayed or turned up, torn, or with worn spots that someone could trip over)?					
Are plastic runners/carpet protectors tacked down (not folded or turned up at edges)?					
Do throw rugs have anti-skid backing and no upturned corners?					
Is tile/linoleum free of chips, tears, and not slippery?					
Are bare wood floors slip resistant?					
Is there at least one comfortable chair people can get in and out of safely and easily?					
Is furniture stable?					
Do tables have rounded edges that are clearly visible (no sharp edges or made of glass)?					
Do windows open easily?					
Are shades and blinds easy to open?					
Are they securely attached?					
Are electrical cords run behind furniture and not across the floor or under the rug?					

Family and other room(s)

	FR		Other		If no, plan of action
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Is the lighting adequate?					
Is there a light switch at the entrance to the room?					
Is there a clear, unobstructed path through the room (no clutter, cords, wires, baskets and other things to trip over)?					
Are thresholds minimal and carpet binders tacked down?					
Are carpets in good condition (not frayed or turned up, torn, or with worn spots that someone could trip over)?					
Are plastic runners/carpet protectors tacked down (not folded or turned up at edges?)					

Family and other room(s) (continued)

	FR		Other		If no, plan of action
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Do throw rugs have anti-skid backing and no upturned corners?					
Is tile/linoleum free of chips, tears, and not slippery?					
Are bare wood floors slip resistant?					
Is there at least one comfortable chair people can get in and out of safely and easily?					
Is furniture stable?					
Do tables have rounded edges that are clearly visible(no sharp edges or made of glass)?					
Do windows open easily?					
Are shades and blinds easy to open?					
Are they securely attached?					
Are electrical cords run behind furniture and not across the floor or under the rug?					

Bathrooms

	Bath #1		Bath #2		If no, plan of action
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
General considerations					
Is there a light switch at the entry?					
Is there adequate lighting overall?					
...At the sink?					
...Over the tub/shower?					
Is there a night-light?					
Is the door threshold less than one inch?					
Is the room free of clutter and tripping hazards?					
Is the flooring non-slip/non-skid (including throw rugs), even when wet?					
Are there grab bars in other areas of the room, as needed?					
Is the room kept warm during bathing (heat lamp, towel warmers, etc.)?					
Sinks					
Are sink faucets easy to reach and read?					
Is it easy to determine where the hot and cold areas of the faucet are?					
Is it easy to mix the temperature?					
If necessary, have anti-scald devices been installed?					
Is the sink wheelchair accessible or can someone sit at the sink?					
Are mirrors at an appropriate height?					

Bathrooms (Continued)

	Bath #1		Bath #2		If no, plan of action
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Tub/shower					
Are there sturdy grab bars in the tub and/or shower, if needed?					
Is the shower curtain bottom out of the way so it is not a tripping hazard?					
Are toiletries in the tub easily reached from sitting and standing positions?					
Is there a non-skid bathmat in the bathtub?					
Is there a hand-held shower head?					
Are tub/shower faucets easy to use and read (hot and cold clearly marked)?					
If needed, is there a tub or shower seat?					
If shower/tub doors are present, are they made of a non-shattering material?					
Toilet					
Are there sturdy grab bars at the toilet (or toilet arms and a raised seat)?					
Is toilet paper easily reachable from the toilet seat?					
Is the toilet seat in good condition and securely fastened?					

Kitchen

	Yes No		If no, plan of action
	Yes	No	
Are frequently used items visible and easily reached (front of pantry and refrigerator)?			
Are sink faucets easy to reach and read?			
Is it easy to determine where the hot and cold areas of the faucet are?			
Is it easy to mix the temperature?			
If necessary, have anti-scald devices been installed or the hot water temperature lowered?			
If necessary, have timers been installed on the oven and cook top?			
Are burners and control knobs clearly labeled and easy to use?			
Are the controls on the front of the stove, not the back?			
Is there a close resting place nearby for hot vessels coming out of the oven?			
Is glass cookware being used so person sees food is being cooked?			
Is the microwave easy to read, reach and operate?			

Kitchen (Continued)

	Yes	No	If no, plan of action
Are towels, curtains, potholders, and other objects that might catch fire located away from the range?			
Is there a step stool that is stable and in good condition?			
Is kitchen ventilation system or range exhaust functioning properly?			
Is there good lighting over work areas?			

Laundry

Is there a light switch at the entry?			
Is there sufficient lighting?			
Is the route to the laundry room (stairs) safe?			
Are the appliances at the right height so it is easy to get clothes in/out of the washer and dryer?			
Are the control knobs easy to reach, read and operate?			
Are laundry supplies easy and safe to reach?			
Is there a non-slip floor surface?			
Are tripping hazards off the floor (laundry basket or dirty clothes)?			

Bedrooms

	Bed #1		Bed #2		If no, plan of action
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Is there a light at the entrance to the room?					
Is a light reachable from the bed?					
Can bureau drawers be reached (height of the drawer) and opened easily?					
Is there a clear, unobstructed path through the room (clutter and furniture are out of the way)?					
Are cords and wires off the floor?					
Do throw and area rugs have non-slip backing and no upturned corners?					
Are wood and linoleum floors non-skid?					
Is carpet smooth (no folds or holes) and tacked down?					
Are curtains and bed coverings off the floor so they are not tripping hazards?					
Is there support for getting in and out of bed, if needed?					
Is there a place to sit and get dressed, if needed?					
Are windows easy to open and close?					
Are window blinds and shades working properly and easy to open?					
Are blinds and shades properly secured?					

Bedrooms (Continued)

	Bed #1		Bed #2		If no, plan of action
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Is there a telephone within reach of the bed?					
Are any assistive walking devices (cane, walker, wheelchair) within reach of the bed?					
Is there a flashlight or some other form of non-electric lighting within reach of the bed in case of a power outage?					
Are electric blankets not folded, covered by other objects, or "tucked in," when in use. The power cord is not pinched or crushed by the bed, between a wall or the floor?					

Closets

	Clo #1		Clo #2		If no, plan of action
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Are shelves and clothes poles easy to reach?					
Have closet organizers been installed to maximize use of space?					
Are closets organized so clothes are easy to find?					
Are clutter and other tripping hazards off the floor?					
Do closets have lights that are easy to find and reach?					
Are closet doors easy to open?					
If closet has sliding doors, do they stay on track?					

General home safety concerns

	Yes	No	If no, plan of action
Can an older person contact someone in an emergency (medi-alert, names and numbers by phone, picture telephone, etc.)?			
Are smoke detectors installed and working on every level of the home, outside sleeping areas and inside bedrooms?			
Are carbon monoxide (CO) alarms installed and working on every level of the home, outside sleeping areas and inside bedrooms?			
Is there a fire extinguisher in the house?			
Is there a safe place outside to hide a key to the house for emergency entry?			
Are emergency numbers posted on or near all telephones?			
Are telephones positioned low enough so they can be reached if a fall occurs?			
Is there a fire extinguisher in the kitchen?			

General home safety concerns (Continued)

	Yes	No	If no, plan of action
Are all portable space heaters and wood-burning heating equipment at least 3 feet from walls, furniture, curtains, rugs, newspapers or other flammable materials?			
Are all medications in child-resistant containers that are clearly marked with the medication name and dose?			
Is the area where medications are kept well lit?			
Is the water heater set to no more than 120 degrees Fahrenheit?			
Are containers of flammable and combustible liquids stored outside of the house?			
Are portable generators not operating in the basement, garage, or anywhere near the house?			
Is there an emergency exit plan?			
Are small appliances, such as hair dryers, toasters, etc. unplugged when not in use?			
No electrical outlets or switches are unusually warm or hot to the touch?			
Do all electrical outlets and switches have cover plates installed so no wiring is exposed?			
Are all GFCI receptacles working properly?			

Specific safety considerations for people with Alzheimer's Disease or other dementias

	Yes	No	If no, plan of action
<i>General considerations</i>			
Is there a safe outdoor area that the person with dementia can use without wandering away (escape-proof porch or deck, fenced-in yard with locked gate)?			
Have poisonous plants and shrubs or plantings with berries been removed?			
Are there security locks on all exterior doors (double key, installed out of sight, etc.)?			
Is a key hidden outside in case the person locks out the caregiver?			
Are exterior and other doors to off-limit areas alarmed?			
Is access to stairwells, storage areas, basements, garages, and other off-limit areas controlled (with locks, secure gates, Dutch doors, etc.)?			
Is access to home offices and computer/home finance areas controlled?			
If necessary, can all doors to off-limit areas be disguised?			
Are there eye-level decals on all glass doors and large picture windows?			
Can all windows be securely locked?			

Specific safety considerations for people with Alzheimer’s Disease or other dementias (Continued)

	Yes	No	If no, plan of action
Is there a drawing, picture or short instruction list for tasks or daily schedule?			
Is there use of colors or color contrast to highlight an object?			
Is there a safe, clear pathway through the house where the person can walk or wander safely without tripping, knocking into, or damaging something?			
If necessary, are childproof plugs in all unused electrical outlets?			
Are radiators and hot water pipes that the person might touch covered?			
Are all prescription medications and over-the-counter medicines locked up?			
Have all poisonous plants been removed (including artificial ones that look real)?			
Is alcohol out of sight and locked up?			
Are plastic/dry cleaner’s bags out of reach (could cause choking or suffocation)?			
Are all weapons locked up or removed from the house (guns, knives, etc.)?			
If orientation or getting lost in the house is a problem, complete the following checklist			
Are there signs, arrows, photographs, pointing to the bathroom, bedroom, and other places the person needs to find?			
Are doors that the person needs to use highlighted (signs, color)?			
Is there a photo or memento on the door to help someone find his/her bedroom?			
Are there night-lights or light strips leading to the bathroom from the bedroom?			
Is the bathroom door left open when not in use to serve as a visual cue?			
Are closets, drawers, and cabinets that hold things the person can use labeled?			
If hallucinations/misrecognition are problems, complete the following checklist			
Are light levels even so that shade and shadows are kept to a minimum?			
Has ominous-looking artwork been removed (masks, distortions, abstract work)?			
If the person gets upset by his/her or another person’s image			
Are windows covered at night so person cannot see his/her reflection?			
Are mirrors covered?			
Have portraits and large photographs of people been removed or covered?			

Specific safety considerations for people with Alzheimer’s Disease or other dementias (Continued)

	Bath #1		Bath #2		If no, plan of action
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Bathroom safety checklist for people with dementia					
Have all medicines and non-electric razors been put away?					
Have all cleaning agents been put away?					
Are other harmful objects removed from the cabinets and fixtures?					
Are sink faucets easy to reach and read?					
Is it easy to determine where the hot and cold areas of the faucet are?					
Is it easy to mix the temperature?					
Have anti-scald devices been installed?					
Does the color of the toilet fixture and/or seat contrast with the wall and floor for easy identification?					
Have all trash cans been removed if the person uses them as a toilet?					
Are there night-lights/signs giving directions to the bathroom and fixtures?					
Are instructions posted by the toilet, sink and shower/tub?					
Kitchen safety checklist for people with dementia					
Are all drawers and cabinets with safe objects labeled?					
Are childproof locks on drawers and cabinets that are, or should be, off limits?					
Has access to the stove been controlled (knobs removed, lock on oven door, stove connected to hidden circuit breaker or gas valve)?					
If necessary, has access to the refrigerator and freezer been controlled with a refrigerator lock?					
Is there a night-light in the kitchen (for safe midnight snacking)?					
Have sharp knives and other dangerous implements been removed or locked up?					
Has excess clutter been removed from counter-tops and tables?					
Have all vitamins, sweeteners, over-the-counter medicines, and prescription drugs been removed (or left out in limited quantities only)?					
Have all poisonous cleaning agents been removed or locked up?					
Have all “fake” foodstuffs been removed (wax/ceramic fruit, food-shaped magnets)?					
If necessary, has the kitchen been closed off?					

Specific safety considerations for people with Alzheimer’s Disease or other dementias (Continued)

Yes No

Bedroom safety checklist for people with dementia

Are there night-lights (and signs, if necessary) along the path to the bathroom?		
Is there a monitor/intercom between the person’s and the caregiver’s areas?		
Has clutter and other potentially dangerous items (cologne, after-shave lotion, deodorant, etc.) been removed from dresser tops?		
Are drawers organized simply and labeled?		

About this checklist

This checklist was developed using the following process. A search was conducted on the following terms: “Home safety checklist for elderly,” “home safety evaluation,” and “CDC home safety checklist.” Based on these terms, 18 checklists were identified and reviewed for content. Additionally, three sources were used as a starting point: Olsen & Hutchings, Home Safety Checklist, Clemson’s Westmead Safety Checklist, and Gitlin et. al’s, “Home Environmental Assessment Protocol for People with Dementia.” Additional checklists were then examined to determine if additional items should be added.


For additional information go to the References section on p. 103 of the Aging and Its Financial Implications: Planning for Housing brochure.

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