

For your health

Safety in the Home

Optimizing home safety

Older people generally prefer to live at home, either alone or with their families. It allows them to enjoy the comforts of familiar surroundings, while still staying close to their loved ones.

However, living at home does present challenges. For example, falls are the number one in-home cause of death in the elderly. Most older people can live safely at home provided they make a few adjustments to compensate for any decline in their physical or mental function.

Making your home safe

Falls are common as people age for a multitude of reasons. **Visit Frequently Asked Questions About Falls**, to learn more.

Research suggests that up to half of home accidents could be prevented by making some very simple modifications. Most of the changes needed are easy to make.

Here are a few suggestions:

- **Put a second railing in the stairwells.**
People are safer going up and down stairs if there is a railing on each side of the staircase.
- **Mark trouble spots with bright tape.**
The combination of failing eyesight and poor lighting can make the first and last steps on staircases, along with protruding furniture corners, high-risk accident zones. Applying strips of bright tape and using bright light in these areas would make these spots easier to see.
- **Put grab bars in the bathtub.**
A significant number of falls occur in the bathroom. This is unfortunate because it's an easy area to make safe from accidents. Putting grab bars in the shower or alongside the tub gives people something to hang onto. Also using nonskid strips or mats on the shower or tub floor and on the bathroom floor reduces the risk of falling.

At Aetna, we believe there is nothing more important than your health. That's why we're pleased to bring you information to help you take an active role in the management of your health.

- **Get a tub seat and other bath accessories.** A tub seat or sliding board and a showerhead extension allow the water to move rather than the bather. If possible, take an additional safety measure and bathe when there is someone else at home with you.
- **Install lights in dark places.** Sufficient lighting is important to illuminate dark places, such as hallways and stairwells. Plug-in nightlights can help. Also available are lights with sensors that automatically come on when the light level gets low.
- **Invest in a personal alarm.** A personal alarm can be triggered if a person falls or is in trouble. With the push of a button, the alarm automatically sends a signal, which alerts someone to call and see if the person needs help. If no one answers the phone, designated family members or friends or emergency services are notified.

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