

PATIENT SAFETY IS A MAJOR CONCERN

The keys to safe and sensible home care include:

- Safety improvements in and around the home
- Emergency planning – always important, but even more so with a patient at home
- Patience and understanding – home care means change, and change means taking time to adjust

ADAPT THE HOME FOR SAFETY

Make the appropriate changes as soon as possible. Suggestions include:

- **IN THE KITCHEN**
 - Set utensils, foods, and other needed items at a convenient height.
 - Install grab bars on the walls
 - Choose a convenient height for mounting foils, wraps, and paper towels on the wall
 - Develop a safe system for storing heavy pots (for example at waist height or close to the door)
- **IN THE BATHROOM**
 - Install grab bars on bathroom walls (especially near the toilet and shower)
 - Install a toilet extension seat to raise the seat
 - Switch to a hand-held showerhead
 - Replace bar soap with easier-to-handle liquid soap in plastic bottles
 - Make sure faucets and towel bars are easy to reach
- **ON STAIRS**
 - Build ramps
 - Install new railings
 - Secure old railings
 - Repair or replace steps
 - Install non-skid treads on stairs
- **IN THE BEDROOM**
 - Consider buying or renting a hospital-style bed with siderails
 - Obtain an overbed trapeze so the patient can lift him or herself
 - Have a portable toilet beside the bed
- **THROUGHOUT THE HOME**
 - Maintain clean, bright surroundings
 - Make sure furniture is comfortable and sturdy
 - Lower water heater temperature to 120 degrees Fahrenheit to avoid burns

GUARD AGAINST SLIPS, TRIPS, OR FALLS

- **CLEAR WALKING AREAS:** make sure all cords are out of the way. Keep hallways and high-traffic areas free of clutter, such as books, clothes, toys, boxes.
- **SECURE AREA RUGS:** use tacks, rubber pads or carpet tape to keep area rugs in place. Remove area rugs in the bathroom and kitchen.
- **KEEP STAIRWAYS WELL LIT:** make sure both top and bottom light switches work. Replace burned out bulbs immediately.
- **REPAIR HOLES IN CARPETING:** be sure to fix any flooring that's warped or buckled, too.

- USE NIGHT LIGHTS: put them in bedrooms, bathrooms, hallways, etc.

FIRE SAFETY

- AVOID SMOKING. It's best not to smoke, but if you or another member of the household does, follow these rules:
 - Never light up in bed, when drowsy, or when oxygen is in use
 - Use large, deep ashtrays
 - Never leave smoking materials unattended
 - Stop smoking when taking medication
 - Never throw out smoking materials that are still hot or burning
- INSTALL SMOKE DETECTORS
 - Have smoke detectors on every level in the home
 - Test smoke detectors once a month. Maintain them according to the manufacturer's instructions
- TAKE CARE WITH ELECTRICITY
 - Throw out frayed or damaged electrical cords, have them repaired.
 - Never overload electrical outlets
 - Only use electrical appliances that are listed by a testing laboratory
 - Unplug appliances when not in use
 - Keep electrical appliances away from sink, tub, or shower areas
- PREPARE A FIRE ESCAPE PLAN
 - Plan at least 2 ways out of the home from each room
 - Pick a meeting place outside the home
 - Post your plan where everyone can see it
 - Practice your escape plan at least twice a year