Home safety checker

Staying safe around the house
Age UK is the new force combining Age Concern and Help the Aged.

With almost 120 years of combined history to draw on, we are bringing together our talents, services and solutions to do more to enrich the lives of people in later life.

The Age UK family includes Age Cymru, Age NI and Age Scotland. There are also more than 170 local Age UKs.
# Contents

- Introduction .................................................. 2
- General safety check for around the home .... 3
- Safety in the bedroom ................................... 6
- Safety in the kitchen ...................................... 7
- Safety on the stairs ......................................... 10
- Safety in the bathroom .................................... 11
- Safety in the garden ....................................... 12
- Fire safety ..................................................... 13
- Useful organisations ........................................ 15
Introduction

It's important that we feel safe in our homes, yet more accidents happen at home than anywhere else. We've put together this leaflet to help you do a safety check of your home. By working through the checklists, you should be able to identify and resolve any possible safety risks, and help prevent accidents.

Throughout this leaflet you will find suggestions for organisations that can give further information and advice about your options. Their contact details can be found in the ‘Useful organisations’ section (see pages 15–18). Contact details for local organisations can usually be found in your local phone book. If you have difficulty finding them, your local Age UK should be able to help (see page 15).

As far as possible, the information given in this guide is applicable across the UK.

Key

This symbol indicates who to contact for the next steps you need to take.
General safety check for around the home

Here are a few general safety checks and some tips on how to make sure that your home is safe.

**Are your floors clear of trailing flexes?**
To avoid tripping over cords or wires, coil them up or tape them close to the wall. If you can, organise your appliances so that they are close to a socket.

**Are you careful not to overload sockets?**
Overloaded sockets can be a fire hazard. If you don’t have enough sockets, use a bar adapter on a lead, rather than a block adapter. But for appliances that use a lot of power, like a fridge or washing machine, never fit more than one plug in each socket.

**Can you walk through your rooms without having to walk around furniture?**
Rearranging your furniture can help you to move around your home more easily.

**Do you have good lighting?**
Good lighting is particularly important on the stairs, where it can help you to avoid tripping. Make sure that your light bulbs are bright and come on straight away.

**Do you have worn out or fraying carpets that you might trip over?**
Replacing them or using double-sided carpet tape will help prevent them slipping. Loose rugs and mats can be a trip hazard and should be avoided if possible.
**Do you use a step ladder to change light bulbs?**
Step ladders give stability and safety when changing a light bulb or reaching for something high up. Never use a ladder when you’re on your own.

**Can you call for help if you fall or feel unsafe?**
A community alarm lets you contact a 24-hour response centre at the touch of a button. Many councils run community alarm schemes. Age UK also provides community alarms. For more information about the service and the likely costs call 0800 77 22 66.

**Do you have an easy-to-read list of emergency phone numbers beside each phone?**
List details of important contacts, close friends, relatives and anyone else you think may be useful.

**Do you have a carbon-monoxide detector?**
Carbon monoxide is known as a ‘silent killer’ because you can’t see, taste or smell it. Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning can be similar to cold, flu or food-poisoning symptoms – headache, feeling sick, sore throat and dry cough. Heaters that burn gas, coal, oil or wood can give off carbon monoxide if they are not working properly. Look for a detector bearing the kitemark and European Standard number BS EN 50291. If you suspect that carbon monoxide is present, call National Grid on 0800 111 999.
Have you organised a yearly gas appliances check?
A yearly gas appliance check can ensure that your appliances are working safely. Make sure that the check or any repairs are done by a Gas Safe-registered engineer (see page 16). If you’re a tenant, your landlord is legally required to arrange a safety check, at least once a year, for the gas appliances that they have provided. If you’re an owner occupier, you may qualify for a free, annual safety check from your energy supplier, but you will have to register on their Priority Service Register. Ask your supplier for details.

Do you have a letterbox cage?
This can save you having to stoop to pick up your post. It can also stop papers being spread across the floor, which could cause you to slip.

Do your slippers fit properly?
Worn out or badly fitting slippers can increase your risk of falling. Be careful when wearing any long, loose-fitting clothing in case you trip, particularly when climbing the stairs.

When opening the door to a caller, do you lock, stop, chain and check?
Put the chain on and ask for ID. If in doubt, keep them out. If you are suspicious of a caller, dial 999 and ask for the police. Only chain your front door when you are planning to open it. Keeping a chain on all the time may prevent services from entering in an emergency.
Safety in the bedroom

Do you have sheets and bed covers trailing on the floor?
Tuck them out of the way so they don’t trip you up when you’re moving around.

Do you have a bedside lamp or torch?
This can help if you need to get up in the night, or if there is a power failure.

Do you have an electric blanket?
You should get your electric blanket tested by an expert at least every three years, and replace it every ten years. Check for danger signs, such as frayed fabric and scorch marks. Check whether you have the type of blanket that can be left on overnight – if not, always unplug it when you go to bed. Never switch it on if it’s damp or wet, and never use it with a hot-water bottle.

You should get your electric blanket tested by an expert at least every three years.
Safety in the kitchen

Is there clear counter space around or near the cooker? 
This will allow you to put hot pots and pans down safely.

Are the things you use every day within easy reach? 
Rearrange your shelves and cupboards so that the things you use most often can be reached easily, or use long-handled ‘grabbers’ to avoid stretching.

Are pan handles turned away from the front of the cooker? 
Face pan handles towards the sides of your cooker to stop them being knocked over, and keep them away from the other heat rings.

Do you use a timer to remind yourself when food is ready? 
Always set a timer so you don’t forget about your cooking. Some microwaves have timers that can be used independently of the oven. Never leave hot oil unattended as it is a fire risk.

Is there a risk that you could slip on wet flooring? 
Try to clean up any spills straight away. Non-slip matting can help reduce the risk of slipping.

Are flammable items kept away from the hob? 
Make sure that tea towels, kitchen roll, oven gloves and paper bags are kept away from the cooker.

Do you keep your kitchen equipment as clean as possible? 
A build-up of crumbs or grease, for instance, could be a fire risk.
Do you know what to do if a pan catches fire?
Don’t move the pan or throw water on it. Turn off the heat, if it is safe to do so. Do not try to put the fire out yourself using a wet tea towel, as you risk injuring yourself. Leave the kitchen, close the door and shout to everyone else in the house to leave. Call 999.

If you have a gas boiler with a pilot light, do you regularly check that the pilot light is burning?
If you find it has gone out, there should be instructions on the boiler on how to relight it. If you cannot relight it yourself, call a heating engineer out. Make sure your engineer is Gas Safe-registered.
Always set a timer so you don’t forget about your cooking. Some microwaves have timers that can be used independently of the oven.
Safety on the stairs

Are your stairs free from clutter?
Avoid storing things on the stairs, even temporarily.

Do you have solid handrails, preferably on both sides?
You should have handrails on all staircases, even on small flights.

Do you have a two-way light switch?
This means a light switch at the top and bottom of the stairs. You should contact an electrician to fit one if you don’t.

Can you easily see the edges of each step?
Marking the edge of each step with paint or non-slip masking tape will make them more visible. Make sure that the tape doesn’t become a trip hazard.

Do you have plug-in night lights?
These turn on automatically at night time and provide a low light that can help you see your way to the bathroom or on the stairs if you get up at night.

Do you have emergency power-failure lights?
These lights plug in to power sockets and remain lit if there is a power failure. This means that if the mains power fails after dark, you will still be able to find your way around. Keep a torch on hand to use during a power failure, too.