SO YOU THINK YOU'RE SAFE AT HOME?
HOW SAFE ARE YOU?

It's easy to believe that once we close the front door and are in our homes we are safe. It's easy to forget the natural caution we take out into the streets. We relax. But make no mistake, the home can be a dangerous place. Thousands of people die or are injured every year from accidents in and around the home. Many of these accidents can be avoided with a little care or thought.

This booklet contains a series of questions for you to put to yourself, and suggestions and advice which will help you spot the risks before they become dangers.

This booklet is for everyone, but if you're getting on a little, it's probably worth an extra look. As we grow older most of us feel that we are generally safety conscious. But as the process of growing older continues we have a tendency to move and react more slowly. We find ourselves more set in our habits. We become a little forgetful on occasions. These changes, happening either singly or in combination, tend to make life more risky than in our younger days.
ON THE MOVE

How fit are you?

These days we are encouraged to lead a full and active life for as long as possible. But few people are as fit as they were 10 years earlier. Some people hang up their squash racquet at 40; others join a keep-fit class at 60. They are, in their own way, recognising and adjusting to changing physical abilities.

How safe are you as you move about your home?

Many home injuries are the result of bad falls. Good lighting can help. It is sensible to switch on the light rather than risk a fall even when the surroundings are familiar.

Arrange the furniture so that you can move around freely and without bumping into low items like coffee tables, stools and leg-rests. Make sure there are no trailing flexes, frayed and wrinkled rugs or carpets to trip over. And think what might happen if you fell on to a glass topped coffee table!

Remember that loading and unloading the car boot can result in a strained back. A number of small bags is easier to handle than a large box.

And if you’re getting a little older

Hand-rails on both sides of the staircase can be particularly helpful for those with an arm weakness.

If you wear glasses, take time to accustom yourself to a new pair, especially bi-focus glasses, particularly when going up and down stairs.

When buying shoes look for ridged rubberised soles and non-slip heels to help give you stability.
TAKING YOUR MEDICINE

Are you careful enough with medicine?

It is important for everyone to know how to deal with medicines safely. Most of us have to take medicine at some time in our lives, whether it's for a long term illness or just the flu. If you take tablets keep them safe so no one else can take them by mistake.

With short or long-term medication, how do you rate for safety on the following points?

Keep your medicines in their original containers and preferably in a locked medicine cabinet.

If children are around, make sure your medicines are stored out of their sight and reach.

Return all left-over medicines to your pharmacist. Don't hoard them or give them to your friends.

Make sure you read and understand the instructions on the label. Ask your pharmacist to explain them to you if you are in any doubt.

And if you’re getting a little older

Take only the correct dose regularly as instructed. Remembering whether you have done so is sometimes difficult. In the case of pills and tablets, it can help to set out a whole day’s medication in the morning. A quick count in the course of the day can reassure you that you have taken the required dose . . . or not!

This suggestion is only safe if you can be sure that there are no young children in or around the home.

If you are frustrated by child resistant closures, ask your pharmacist to dispense your medicines in bottles with ordinary screw-caps. But only if there's no danger of children finding them.
IN THE KITCHEN

How safe is your kitchen?
The kitchen is the workshop of the home. A good workshop contains the right tools for the job and provides good working conditions.

Poor layout, old or worn equipment and a belief that spills will be wiped up 'afterwards' lead to all kinds of injuries.

How about your kitchen? How do you rate on the following points?

Plan to have sufficient work surface space beside the sink and cooker to be able to lay things down and work without risk or frustration.

Can you reach most things in everyday use easily? Don't strain to reach high shelves, or bend into low cupboards to reach heavy objects. Use drawers and carousels to store groceries, vegetables and pans. They can help to make low level storage more accessible.

Make sure electrical flexes do not trail over the edge of work surfaces where they catch as you pass, or attract the attention of children. Fit coiled flexes where possible.

A timer helps to remind you that you have left something cooking.

Wipe up spills at once; the sooner you clean them up the less risk there is of slipping on them.

All gas appliances - water heaters, central heating units, back boilers, cookers and fires - require regular servicing. Budget for this important item and do a check from time to time to make sure pilot lights have not gone out.

And if you're getting a little older

Keep everything you need close at hand or get someone to help if you can't reach easily.

Use a tin opener which works easily and which you can operate without injuring yourself. If your grip is poor you may find it easier to use a wall-mounted or electrically operated opener.