

Home Safety Priority Checklist for Aging in Place

1. Use one rule

Reduce the next serious risk first. Start with the real morning, evening, bathing, cooking, and bedtime routines—not a shopping list.

1. Observe the routine.
2. Fix lighting, paths, support, and installation basics.
3. Assign maintenance and alert responsibility.
4. Recheck after a fall, medication change, mobility change, or room rearrangement.

2. Priority walkthrough

Bed-to-bathroom path

- ☐ First steps are visible from the bed.
- ☐ Rugs and cords do not cross the route.
- ☐ Lighting activates before the person enters the dark section.
- ☐ Every turn, threshold, and floor edge is visible.

First action: clear the route and test warm, low-glare lighting from bedside through the bathroom.

Get help when: walking remains unstable, dizziness is new, or the person reaches for walls or furniture.

Bathroom

- ☐ The person does not rely on towel bars or unstable fixtures for balance.
- ☐ Tub entry or shower transfers are manageable.
- ☐ Wet surfaces stay flat and clear.
- ☐ Lighting shows the floor, toilet, tub, and doorway without glare.

First action: measure first; prioritize properly mounted grab bars, a stable seat or transfer bench, traction, and usable lighting.

Get help when: grab bars need structural mounting, transfers require hands-on help, or the layout is too tight.

Stairs and thresholds

- ☐ Step edges are easy to distinguish.
- ☐ Rails are secure and usable.
- ☐ Steps are free of stored items.

- ☐ Thresholds do not catch feet or mobility aids.

First action: improve edge visibility, remove clutter, repair rails, and keep both hands free where possible.

Get help when: stumbles repeat or a ramp, lift, or structural change is considered.

Kitchen and stove

- ☐ Burners and appliances are not repeatedly left on.
- ☐ Smoke and heat alarms can be heard or seen.
- ☐ Controls are understandable.
- ☐ The cooking plan matches fatigue, distraction, and memory changes.

First action: match the fix to the pattern. Use alarms and routines first; consider compatible auto-shutoff when forgotten burners are a repeated event.

Get help when: fires or near misses repeat, memory changes affect cooking, or gas/electrical work is involved.

Help and emergency access

- ☐ A charged phone is reachable from the main living areas.
- ☐ Emergency contacts and the home address are visible.
- ☐ The actual call-for-help routine has been practiced.
- ☐ Someone is assigned to respond to alerts.

First action: simplify the phone, add a visible contact/address card, and test the routine.

Get help when: the person cannot reliably call for help, falls recur, or monitoring needs coordination.

Monitoring and sensors

- ☐ The family can name the exact risk.
- ☐ Consent and privacy have been discussed.
- ☐ The alert recipient and response are defined.
- ☐ A backup exists for Wi-Fi, battery, account, or notification failure.

First action: define the risk and response before buying cameras, door sensors, fall detection, GPS, or subscriptions.

3. Six questions before buying

- ☐ What exact problem happened?
- ☐ Who will install it?
- ☐ Who will maintain batteries, subscriptions, updates, cleaning, and worn parts?
- ☐ Who receives the alert and what do they do next?

- ❑ What happens if the product fails?
- ❑ Does the older adult accept the product and its privacy trade-offs?

4. When a gadget is not enough

- A new fall, dizziness, weakness, confusion, or medication change needs clinical attention.
- Grab bars, ramps, lifts, electrical work, gas controls, and structural changes may require qualified installation.
- Complex transfers, repeated falls, or poor home fit may benefit from occupational therapy or a home-safety evaluation.
- Call emergency services for immediate danger. This checklist is not an emergency response plan.

5. Source notes

This checklist organizes established safety themes into a practical buying order. It does not claim that one product prevents all falls, fires, or emergencies.

- CDC: Older Adult Fall Prevention — <https://www.cdc.gov/falls/about/index.html>
- CDC STEADI — <https://www.cdc.gov/steady/>
- National Institute on Aging: Home Safety and Alzheimer's Disease — <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/safety/home-safety-and-alzheimers-disease>
- NFPA: Cooking Fire Safety — <https://www.nfpa.org/education-and-research/home-fire-safety/cooking>
- FDA: Bed Rail Safety — <https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/consumer-products/bed-rail-safety>

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