



(703) 538- 4584

A Simple Check Can Reduce Household Hazards for Seniors

FALLS CHURCH, VA — One of the biggest fears for adults caring for senior-aged relatives or loved ones is the individual being injured in a fall. As winter eases, especially in areas of the country where snow and ice occur, it is easy to believe the risk of falls is reduced. However, the majority of harmful falls seniors suffer do not occur out of doors.

“According to statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, the majority of falls for people over age 65 occur in the home,” said Mark Turner, President of Right at Home’s Falls Church, VA office. “There are everyday fall hazards around the home that can be significantly reduced.”

A quick, but complete, inspection for fall hazards is an important step towards safety. Adults who live a distance from a senior can hire a qualified senior care agency to conduct a fall safety inspection. ***A free Fall Hazard Home Safety Checklist is available by contacting Right at Home at (703) 538-4584.***

To reduce the risk of falls, walk room-to-room in the home. In all areas, look for loose carpeting and rugs. Check to make sure cords and wires are taped against walls and out of traffic areas. Inspect any handrails near stairs or other inclines to ensure they are the proper height for the senior and fastened securely. In all areas, look for proper lighting and burned out light bulbs.

“Lighting is something that is easy to overlook,” said Turner. “Seniors may have a hard time replacing a burned out bulb in the ceiling, so over time a multi-bulb fixture puts out less and less light. Also remember, aging people may experience diminishing eyesight, making it harder to see in dim lighting.”

The bathroom is one area where fall hazards abound. Consider placing non-slip surfaces in the tub or shower. Similarly, grab rails are a good way to reduce falls around the tub and toilet. Bath mats or other small rugs should have non-slip backings. It is a good idea to install a night light in the bathroom to improve visibility upon entry.

The bedroom is another area where falls can occur, because seniors are changing levels from lying to sitting to standing. It is best to have a clear path from the bed to the bathroom. A bedside table should have a sturdy lamp and a place for eyeglasses to aid getting out of bed. It also is recommend that a chair be placed in the room to aid dressing.

“These are just a few tips to minimize the risk for falls for seniors,” said Turner. “These seem like common sense ideas, but if someone doesn’t live close enough to the senior, these things may not be getting done. Bringing in someone for a short safety inspection can be a very good investment.”

There are additional areas of household safety that are not as obvious. Seniors should have routine eye examinations to check for diminishing eyesight or update prescription glasses. The senior, family or caregiver should talk to a physician to determine if prescription medications increase the risk of falls. A family member or caregiver also should encourage the senior to do regular light exercise to improve his or her physical condition. Perhaps the most important safety step is to have a family member or caregiver make routine contact with the senior to ensure they have not suffered an accident.

“Have someone regularly check with the senior, especially if they have an increased risk of falls because of physical health or disability,” said Turner. “If someone in the family is not available, consider hiring an in-home senior care agency to come in a few times a week and assist the senior. A caregiver can monitor the wellbeing of the individual and perform household tasks which have become difficult.”

Right at Home is a national franchise organization, with a local office that serves the communities of Northern Virginia. Right at Home offers in-home care and assistance to seniors and other adults to help them continue living independently. Right at Home care providers are trained, bonded and insured professionals who provide services from a few hours per week to around-the-clock, based on individual needs. Services offered include support for everyday activities of living such as light housework, medication reminders, nutritious meal preparation, shopping and errands, transportation, and companionship. Medical home healthcare for hands-on personal care such as bathing, dressing and transfer assistance also is offered. For more information on Right at Home, please visit the company's web site at www.RightatHome.net/NOVA.

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