

50 Safety Tips (Especially For Seniors)

According to the National Institute on Aging, approximately 22 percent of aging Americans (aged 71 years or older) experience some level of cognitive decline. Age-related brain atrophy and changes in hormones, neurotransmitters, and blood supply affect how our brain physically and functionally processes information. Physical and functional debility contributes to cognitive decline as well. Unsurprisingly, a decrease in physical function increases the risk of bodily injury. Whether the changes are apparent, a decline in mental and physical functioning significantly increases the risk of injury and harm. The cognitive and physical changes commonly noted during aging may make this age demographic more susceptible to scams and/or accidents. Unfortunately, older adults are sometimes considered vulnerable, making them a target. To ensure their safety and security, creating an environment that is as safe as possible while providing security in all aspects of life (home, financial, internet safety) is a priority.

Here are 50 safety tips to make aging in place easier, safer, and more enjoyable for you and your loved one.

Fall Prevention Safety

1. Remove obstacles in the house that could cause tripping. This includes throw rugs (small or large), decorative objects on the floor (e.g., vases, magazine racks, umbrella stands, coat racks), power cords, cords to appliances, and any clutter. Be aware of any areas of uneven flooring and fix them.
2. Utilize handrails on staircases and keep them well-lit. Install lights on staircases, with light switches at both the top and bottom of the stairs. Consider adding sensor lights every few stairs.
3. Install shower and tub grab bars in the bathroom, around the toilet, in the shower, and around the tub. Ensure they are at the correct height and easy to use.
4. Ensure the toilet is high enough. Consider adding a riser to the toilet seat to make standing up easier.
5. Place no-slip mats on the shower floor and bathtub. Make sure they are secured before use.
6. Paint doorsills with a different, highlighting color to avoid tripping.
7. Put on hip pads if you're at high risk for falls. These can help absorb shock if you do fall and may decrease the risk of fracture.

8. Make the home lighting brighter but prevent glare. Eyes change during the aging process, requiring more brightly lit spaces to see adequately. Preventing glare is crucial, as older eyes are more sensitive to light. This can be accomplished by filtering light with shades, frosted bulbs, and light diffusers.
9. Have your vision checked often and regularly. You may need a different prescription or to avoid driving at night. As we age, the amount of light our eyes can absorb decreases, so your vision at night is not what it was when you were younger.
10. Ask your medical provider to review your medication regularly. You may no longer need certain medicines or may need lower dosages; with age, bodies become more sensitive to medications. Low blood pressure, a leading cause of falls, may occur due to medications.
11. Start exercising regularly, especially tai chi or yoga, to increase flexibility, maintain mobility, and strengthen muscles and joints. Maintaining a strong physical state will decrease your fall risk. If you can't stand comfortably, do your exercises in a chair. Physical activity stimulates the body and the mind, making it doubly beneficial. Get up slowly from a sitting position, ensuring that you are steady before starting to walk. Look around the room before you start moving to ensure a safe path.
12. Consider wearing a safety alert button to allow quicker calling for help if you fall.

Fire And Kitchen Safety

1. Use a microwave rather than the stove when possible. Ensure your appliances are in good working order.
2. Ensure good lighting in the kitchen, and install a light over the stove for better visibility.
3. Ensure smoke detectors are installed in all rooms, and check batteries regularly.
4. Avoid wearing loose clothing when cooking—fabric can catch fire very quickly. Also, tie your hair back while working in the kitchen.
5. Point pot handles away from the front edge of the stove. This ensures that you won't bump into them or catch your sleeve on them while cooking.
6. Have oven mitts available and ready for use; storing them next to the stove is a great idea.
7. Never leave cooking food unattended. Once you start cooking, set a timer for 10 minutes on your stove; if you step away from the kitchen and forget that you began cooking, your timer will remind you.
8. Wipe off any spilled grease from the stove regularly.

9. Avoid using appliances with frayed cords; get them repaired or replaced.
10. Keep a fire extinguisher handy and ensure that it works or isn't expired (fire extinguishers generally have a 10-12 year lifespan)

Car Safety

1. Ensure all doors are locked and windows rolled up while driving to ensure no intruders can access your vehicle while you are on the road, and never leave valuables in plain view (cell phone, purse, money).
2. Never leave car keys inside the vehicle, and always lock the doors when leaving, even if it's for a short time!
3. Ensure that your headlights are cleaned regularly to provide optimal light. Also, headlights and casings should be replaced every few years.
4. Park as close as possible to where you are going. Look up directions to your destination before leaving, if possible.
5. Avoid hiding a spare key in the car; this dramatically increases your risk of car theft.
6. When returning to your car, look around as you approach and peek in the back seat before you get in.
7. Have your key ready in your hand before approaching the car; don't fumble looking for it. Consider attaching your key to something easy to access, like your belt loop or purse handle.
8. Once you're inside the car, lock all doors immediately.

Home Safety

1. Put large numbers on your house that you can read easily from the street. Some house numbers reflect in the light; consider these for your mailbox or house.
2. If you want to hide a spare key in the house, ensure it is well hidden. Consider using a hide-a-key lockbox. Never put it in predictable places like under the doormat, a potted plant, or on top of the doorframe.
3. Leave a key with a neighbor you trust if you are locked out.
4. Set a timer on a radio or television to make it sound like someone is home when you run an errand.
5. Have deadbolts installed on your doors. Ensure any sliding glass doors are locked and utilize a security bar for extra protection.
6. Lock all doors—especially the front door—when working in the attic, basement, or yard.

7. Never open the door to a stranger; if possible, install a doorbell camera so you can see who is at the door. If they claim to be a repairman or a salesman, ask for identification or call the company they say they work for and verify.
8. If someone needs to use the phone, get the number and call it for them.
9. Never tell people you are alone.
10. If you must let a stranger in, don't let them think you are alone. Turn on a radio or television in another room to give the impression that someone else is around. Ensure that you have an accessible exit if you do let them in your home.
11. Limit the number of rooms a visitor can see. Don't show strangers what you have in the house.
12. Make it a habit to be security-conscious and aware of your surroundings.

Financial Safety

1. Never leave your personal information unattended, including your purse, wallet, checkbook, cell phone, tablet, and iPad.
2. Always carry your wallet or any bills in a pocket of your pants or in your bag that is viewable to you (front pocket of pants, inside a secured purse/bag). Never carry cash or your wallet in a rear pocket.
3. Avoid having large amounts of cash or valuables at home and in your purse/wallet.
4. Shred all personal and financial information; never just throw it into the trash intact. Use a shredder to destroy sensitive information properly.
5. Never give your Social Security number or bank details to anyone. If someone calls you and asks you to confirm that the account numbers are yours, do not give them any information. Ask for a phone number so you can call them back after you have verified their identity.
6. If you get calls asking for donations, tell them to send requests by mail; never discuss donations over the phone.
7. Verify the status of a charity before donating.
8. Arrange to have Social Security checks directly deposited to your bank.