



Having a safe home important for maintaining a healthylifestyle



A couple of days ago I visited with my grandmother at her home and noticed that there was an extension cord running across the living room doorway, a throw rug crumbled in the middle of the kitchen floor and shoes placed on the stairs. Is there something wrong with this picture?

Many people say that there is no place like home. Have you ever thought about how safe your home really is on the inside and outside?

The American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons (AAOS) reports that each year more than 734,000 adults (65 and older) are treated in the emergency room for accidents that occur with belongings and items that they use and live with everyday such as furniture, carpeting, stairs and bathtubs.

Many people do not think of the simple things in the home that could cause safety problems.

June is Home Safety Month. Take the time to look in and around your home to assess how safe it is.

You could also have a trained professional evaluate your home.

There are many steps that you can take to make your home safer and to reduce your chance of a preventable accident.

The New Jersey division of fire safety reports that adults (65 and older) suffer twice as many deaths due to fires compared to the general population.

The good news is that over half of all fires can be prevented.

Preventing Fires

- Check all extension cords for damage such as fraying or cracking. Extension cords that are damaged or cut are never okay to use. Try to arrange furniture so it is not resting on extension cords because extension cords can be damaged and that could cause fires or could cause someone to get shocked.
- When replacing bulbs only use light bulbs of the recommended wattage or less wattage.
- Make sure there are smoke detectors inside or outside of all sleeping areas and on every floor including the basement.

If you have a hearing impairment special approved smoke detectors that trigger a strobe light or a vibrating pad under your mattress are available.

Smoke detectors should be tested at least once every month. The Valley Care Association encourages adults (65 and older) to test a smoke detector

using a yard stick or even better enlist some help from your grandkids because standing on a chair is never safe.

The Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers recommend that you get in a good habit of changing your batteries in your smoke detectors when you change your clocks twice a year. Another important thing to remember is smoke detectors do not last forever and can become worn over time. The Valley Care Association recommends that you replace your smoke detectors about every five to six years.

Falls can have devastating effects for people of all ages and adults 65 and older are no exception.

More than 3,000 adults (65 and older) fall while standing on chairs and about 6,800 adults (65 and older) fall due to rugs or carpet runners (AAOS). Many falls can be prevented.

Preventing Falls

- Make sure your house is well lit inside and out.
- Use a night light at night so you can see where you are going.
- Flash lights should be available around the house in case of emergencies so that you can always see where you are going.
- Make sure the floor/steps are clear of anything you could trip over especially cords and wires.
- The best fall prevention method is to use no throw rugs; but if you have to, do not use throw rugs or runners that are not slip resistant.
- Have bathroom grab bars installed near the bathtub and commode.
- Bathmats are essential for showers so you do not slide or lose your balance.
- Shower chairs are available if standing in the shower is difficult or unsafe.
- Railings should be on all stairs inside and outside of the house.
- Make sure side walks are free from clutter such as hoses.
- Make sure salt is available if the sidewalks become icy.
- Make sure steps outside of home are not cracked or broken.
- Outside sidewalks, porches, driveways and garages should all be well lit. Sensor lights (lights that come on when there is motion) are available at most hardware stores.

Taking care of the safety in and around your home is important. Most ways to prevent accidents can easily be done by you.

Being safe can lead to a "Healthier Tomorrow".

For more information on home safety please contact:

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- Valley Care Association —
www.valleycareassociation.org/homesafehome.html , 412-749-5257
- Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers —
www.ivcswpa.org/serv.html#homesafety , 412-345-7420

This column was written by Melissa Woodall, Center for Healthy Aging Student Intern and Senior at Slippery Rock University majoring in Community Health.

CHA is a part of the Department of Epidemiology in the Graduate School of Public Health at the University of Pittsburgh. It is one of 33 Prevention Research Centers in the United States funded by the Center for Disease Control. For questions and more information contact David J. Fetterman, Community Outreach Coordinator & Director of Education at the Center for Healthy Aging at 412-383-3121 or visit www.healthyaging.pitt.edu.