

## **Aging in Place: Home Maintenance and Household Fun Safety Tips for Your Home**

### **General Home Safety Basics**

The safety of family, home and belongings is critical to all of us. Being prepared and alert can save time, injury and, possibly, your life. Here is a general list of some things to do to help keep your family safe around your home:

- Store medications and small items such as jewelry and coins where toddlers can't reach. Be alert for items that would stick in a child's throat.
- Lock unloaded guns in a secure place and store guns and bullets in separate places. Do not let children see where the gun or bullets are hidden.
- Put razors, cosmetics and other health and beauty items out of reach.
- Do not leave hair dryers, curling irons or other grooming appliances out after use.
- Install child safety latches on cabinets and drawers.
- Do not store prescription drugs in the bathroom. Find a cool, dry spot in the house that is out of the reach of children and check for childproof safety caps for medication.
- Set your water heater temperature at 120 degrees Fahrenheit or lower to prevent burns and scalds.
- Turn pot handles away from the edge of the stove.
- Store cleaners and chemicals in their original containers in places where children can't get to them. Never store them under the sink, even if protected by safety latches.
- Keep knives and other sharp objects out of children's reach.
- Tuck away cords of electrical appliances, so that small children cannot grab them.
- Replace electrical cords that are frayed or cracked or that become hot. Do not overload outlets and extension cords. Never run electrical cords under rugs.
- Put safety caps in all unused electrical outlets.
- Place house plants out of reach of children. Some are poisonous, if eaten, and others could injure your child, if a heavy pot fell on him or her.
- Secure bookcases to the walls to prevent toddlers from pulling the cases over.
- Keep tools and garden chemicals out of children's reach.



## **General Property Protection**

### **Check Your Locks**

- Every exterior door should have a dead-bolt lock with a one-inch throw.
- If you just moved into a new house or apartment, re-key the locks. You never know who may still have old keys.
- Do not hide your keys in mailboxes, planters, or under doormats. Give a duplicate key to a trusted neighbor instead.
- Secure sliding glass doors with commercially available locks, with a rigid wooden dowel in the track or with a nail inserted through a hole drilled in the sliding door frame and projecting into the fixed frame.
- Lock double-hung windows with window key locks or by sliding a bolt or nail through a hole drilled at a downward angle in each top corner or the inside sash and part way through the outside sash. Consider grilles for basement or street-level windows if you live in a high-crime area.

### **Check Your Doors**

- Locks lose their effectiveness if they are installed in flimsy or weak doors. Make sure outside doors are solid, at least 1 ¾-inch metal or hard wood. Doors should fit tightly in their frames, and hinges should be on the inside. Double check the door between your house and the garage since that is a common entry spot for thieves.
- Install a peephole or wide-angle viewer in all entry doors so you can see who is outside without opening the door.

### **Look at Your Home from the Outside**

- To discourage burglars from selecting your home, make sure that any shrubbery around doors and windows is pruned so they will not hide anyone tampering with the entry points. Cut back tree limbs that could help a thief climb into second story windows.
- Keep your yard well-maintained and store ladders and tools inside your garage or basement when you're not using them.
- All entrances and porches should be well lit.

### **Consider an Alarm System**

- If you live in an isolated area or in a neighborhood vulnerable to break-ins, explore the costs of an alarm system.

### **Prepare When You Leave Town**

- Notify a trusted neighbor who has a view of your house of your vacation schedule and ask him or her to pick up your mail, deliveries and newspapers; or have them stopped.
- Put lights and a radio on timers to create the illusion that someone is home. Leave shades, blinds, and curtains in normal positions and arrange to have your lawn and garden maintained if you will be gone a long time.
- In winter, ask your neighbor to remove snow from your sidewalk and driveway and to leave footprints around your home to make it look like someone is around.