

Safety Tips for Older Adults

Help keep your parents safe while living independently.

Fall Prevention Safety

- Remove obstacles in the house that could cause tripping—everything from small floor rugs to objects on the floor like an oversized vase or magazine stand.
- Install handrails and lights on staircases, with light switches at the top and bottom of the stairs.
- Install shower and tub grab bars in the bathroom, around the toilet and the tub.
- Place no-slip mats on the shower floor and bathtub.
- Paint doorsills with a different, highlighting color to avoid tripping.
- Make home lighting brighter, but prevent glare.
- Have vision checked often and regularly.
- Ask the doctor to review medication regularly.
- Exercise regularly, especially tai chi or yoga to increase flexibility and strengthen muscles and joints.

Fire And Kitchen Safety

- Use a microwave rather than the stove.
- Make sure smoke detectors are installed in all rooms, and check batteries regularly.
- Avoid loose clothing when cooking—fabric can catch fire very quickly.
- Point pot handles away from the front edge of the stove. This ensures that they won't bump into them or catch your sleeve on them.
- Never leave cooking food unattended.
- Wipe off any spilled grease from the stove.
- Avoid using appliances with frayed cords; get them repaired or replaced.
- Ensure there is adequate lighting in all areas.
- Have a fire extinguisher handy.

Car Safety

- Make sure all doors are locked and windows rolled up while driving.
- Never leave anything valuable in plain view.
- Never leave car keys inside the vehicle, not even for "just a minute."
- Always lock the doors when leaving the vehicle, even for only a short time.
- Park as close as possible to where you are going.
- Avoid hiding a spare key in the car.
- When returning to your car, look around as you approach the vehicle.
- Have your key ready in your hand before approaching the car; don't fumble looking for the key.
- Peek into the back seat of your car before getting in.
- Once you're inside the car, lock all doors immediately.

Home Safety

- Put large numbers on the house that they can easily be read from the street.
- If you want to hide a spare key to the house, make sure to really hide it. Never put it in predictable places like under the doormat.
- Leave a key with a neighbor you trust.
- Set a timer on a radio to make it sound like there's somebody home when nobody is home.
- Have dead bolts installed on doors.
- Lock all doors—especially the front door.
- If it's someone needing to use the phone, get the number and call it for them.
- Never tell people you are alone.
- 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.
- Limit the number of rooms a visitor can see. Don't show strangers what you have in the house.
- Make it a habit to be security conscious.

Financial Safety

- Never leave your purse unattended.
- Always carry your wallet or any bills in a front pocket, never in a rear pocket.
- Avoid having large amounts of cash or valuables at home.
- Tear up or shred all personal and financial information; never just throw it into the trash.
- Never give your Social Security number or particulars about your bank accounts to anyone; if someone calls you and asks you to confirm that the account numbers are yours, don't do it.
- If you get calls asking for donations, tell them to send requests by mail; never discuss donations over the phone.
- Verify the status of a charity before making a donation.
- Arrange to have Social Security checks direct-deposited to your bank.