

Bathroom Safety Checklist



The bathroom is one of the leading places for non-fatal accidents among the elderly. Why? Simple, we have slick surfaces, hard edges, and cramped quarters and are usually not wearing any kind of protective clothing! Here are some practical things to consider

- Install grab bars by toilet and tub/shower areas. Toilet frames, arm rests or commodes can be attached to or placed around the toilet.
- Wipe up spills from shower or tub immediately or carpet entire bathroom to avoid slips or falls.
- Use shower seat and shower hose if unable to stand safely while showering.
- Check and set water heater thermostat to ensure that water temperature is not too hot.
- Avoid use of electrical equipment in the bathroom as much as possible. Water contact with this equipment may cause electrical shock.
- Avoid using bath oil in the tub or shower.

Sounds like common sense stuff. But let's take this one step further. Look at the bathroom. Can the door be eliminated and still provide a reasonable level of privacy? Can a continuous hand rail be placed on the

wall leading to the toilet? Is the toilet at a height that does not require deep knee bends to sit down (you can get risers for existing toilets or replacements that are built higher). Consider the flooring. All rugs and loose flooring need to be secured to prevent trip hazards. If water pools on the floor, does it make a slippery situation? If so – you need to re-do the floor with rubber mats or permanent non-slip flooring material. Now consider the shower or bath. Do you have to climb into it? Is there a provision to sit down? Are there grab bars on 3 sides? Do you have a temperature control device on the hot water line to prevent possible scalding? Now how about the sink and mirror. Treat the mirror with a no-fog substance. Seniors are no different from anyone else and will be leaning over trying to clean the mirror of steam and can lose their balance doing this. Be sure the faucets have handles that can be manipulated by arthritic hands (in the shower also). Again, be sure the hot water line has a temperature protection device – senior skin is far more sensitive than younger skin and can burn very easily.

Many bathrooms can be redesigned by a professional specializing in home retrofitting for seniors and disabled individuals. You may save a lot of frustration and time in seeking out this help.

The Caregiver Foundation of America is a non-profit registered in the State of Hawaii and works to promote Caregiver education, produce workshops and seminars and promote the establishment of Community based caregiver support groups. Call 808-625-3782 for more information and visit www.thecaregiverfoundation.com¹

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