

Kitchen Safety Checklist



The kitchen can be a reasonably safe place that allows seniors to continue to participate in food preparation and maintain as much independence as possible. It can also be a deadly and dangerous place. Heat, sharp objects, things that can fall out of cupboards – all this can add creating a dangerous environment.

As with every room in the house, the first thing to fix is lighting. Rooms and hallways need to have bright lights that chase out shadows and help keep special distortion to a minimum. Then consider the cupboards. There should be nothing that a senior would need to use place above waist height. This may mean removing cupboards or securing them so they cannot be accessed. Now take a look at the content of the cupboards and eliminate anything that is cracked, easily broken or worn. Use modern age plastic containers and cooking utensils. Pots and pans should be light weight but sturdy with handles that can be managed easily by arthritic hands. The flooring needs to be non-slip and preferably covered with a flooring material that minimizes potential breakage when things fall on it.

Faucets need to have lever type handles for easy use. Hot water lines must be regulated. And now – knives and other sharp objects. There are kitchen devices that allow cutting of

foods to be done through slots in cover. This way fingers are never near the object being cut. But – these devices are not liked by most of our senior cooks. Consider altering the purchase of as many things as possible to eliminate the need to cut and slice. Pre-cut meat, breads and desserts; salad and vegetable mixes that are already prepared; fruits that are sliced and ready to eat; anything that makes overall preparation easier and less hazardous.

The stove is probably the most dangerous item in the kitchen. If at all possible, eliminate it in favor of a microwave. If you cannot eliminate it, then place safeguards on it. Find switches that will automatically shut it off if left on for a specified period of time. Be sure smoke alarms are up-to-date and that the kitchen is equipped with a fire extinguisher that you actually practice using. Preventing spills from and stove top and burns from improperly handling pots and pans and baking ware is difficult. Be sure that hot pads are always easily available. Use pans that have handles that isolate the heat away from the handle. Be sure that your loved one has an alarm or easily reached signal to call for emergency help if an accident does occur.

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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