

Are you safe at home?

Factsheet 16c – 29 May 2009 (2 Pages)

Help yourself! Reduce risks in your home

This information is to help keep you safe and maintain your independence at home by helping you to prevent falls and accidents. Falls and accidents are more common as people get older and many older people experience them each year. You can reduce the risk of falls, accidents and injuries by:

- Taking time to look through this factsheet which offers a common sense approach to making your home a safer place, and
- Considering the safety suggestions.

If you need help following any of the suggestions contained in this factsheet ask a friend or relative to help or contact Care Direct on 0845 1551 007.

How do I remove or reduce risks?

Common hazards in the home

Floor coverings. Replace or repair worn or loose floor coverings. Make sure mats and floors are non-slip. **Tape down edges of loose rugs or remove them.*** Mop up spills straight away.

Out of reach items. Keep items you use most often in places that are easy to reach. If necessary you can buy reaching aids. **Ask someone to replace light bulbs.*** Contact your local Devon Care and Repair service for advice and help with repairs and adaptations.

Handrails. Make sure your handrails are securely fitted. **Would it help to have a handrail fitted each side?***

Hallways. Consider having a cage fitted on the back of your letterbox to reduce the need for bending over when collecting letters.*

Position and height of furniture. Ensure that furniture is arranged so that you can move around easily. Keep walkways clear of furniture. Consider removing castors from moveable furniture.*

*(You can get help with small jobs like these through your local Devon Care and Repair service, contact Care Direct on 0845 1551 007 for your local contact number)

Tripping hazards. Make sure there are no trailing flexes or clutter on the floor or stairs. Avoid clothes which are too long.

Pets. Know where your pets are and keep them from under your feet.

Footwear. Make sure that slippers and shoes are well fitting and in good condition. Avoid high heels and thick soled shoes.

Lighting. Always use your lights when light levels are low. Do not use energy saving light bulbs on stairs unless you intend to keep the light on all the time when it is dark.

Clutter. Keep stairs free from clutter. Take care when carrying items on the stairs.

Fire. Use a fire guard on open fires or gas/electric fires. Never rest clothes or place newspapers on the guard.

Kitchen Equipment. Use a timer or alarm clock to remind you when food is cooked. Keep saucepan handles turned away from you when cooking. Keep work surfaces around the cooker tidy and have plenty of space when handling hot food or liquids. Never leave pans unattended. Turn off gas rings etc. when answering the door or telephone.

Kettle. Unplug you kettle before filling it. Consider a cordless kettle or use a jug to fill your kettle.

Only boil as much water as you need.

Bath. If you are not able to get out of the bath easily, would it help to get grab rails, a non-slip bath mat or bath aids? Beware of using oils – they may make the bath slippery. When filling the bath ensure you put cold water in first. Always test the water before getting in the bath or shower. If you need more advice and information on bathing and showering please see our factsheets FS50a, 50b and appendix.

Basin. Sit at the basin while washing if you have difficulty standing to wash. Try a perching stool if you have room.

Bedroom. Make sure the bedspread or duvet is not too long. Avoid trailing night clothes. Sit when dressing rather than standing on one leg.

Electric Blankets. Be aware of the safety instructions for your electric blanket. The Fire Service recommend you check the wiring and plug, never fold it, keep it dry and replace it every ten years or when damaged.

Bedroom Lighting. Have a bedside lamp with an easily reached switch, or torch by the bed. Always switch on a light before getting out of bed. Consider fitting nightlights plugged into spare sockets in the room and landing to give a constant low level of light all the time. Also consider having a phone beside your bed.

Outside your home

Drive and path. Look out for uneven ground or broken pavements! If it's icy, wet or windy, stay indoors and don't be tempted to go out. Are paths and entrances well lit? Do external steps have handrails? Care Direct or Devon Care and Repair can help.

Garden. Do not leave tools lying around. Wind up the garden hose. Always use a circuit breaker when using power tools or mowing the lawn.

General safety suggestions

Gas and electrical appliances. Make sure your boiler, gas and electrical appliances are serviced regularly. If you are over 60 you can have certain gas and electric appliances inspected free once a year. For further information contact your supplier or Energy Watch.

Smoke Alarms. Fit smoke alarms on all levels and make sure you test them regularly. You may be able to receive one free of charge. Contact your local Devon Care and Repair service.

Electric sockets. Do not overload electric sockets. If plugs look brown or wires are frayed stop using them and get them repaired or replaced immediately. If in doubt, seek professional advice.

Keeping warm. Make sure you keep warm in winter. Several layers of light clothing is better than one heavy garment. Where possible, wear head covering.

Emergency situations. Consider getting a personal alarm – especially if you live alone. This would enable you to get help if you fall or injured yourself. Contact Care Direct on 0845 1551 007 for advice. Consider using a cordless phone around the house or getting on answering machine rather than rushing to the phone. Would it help to have a phone beside your chair?

Winter hazards. Keep food cupboards well stocked in case there is snow or ice on paths, steps and pavements if you don't want to go out. Make sure that any alternative heating device you keep for emergencies when your usual heating is lost, has been safety checked annually.

For further information on Falls and accidents see our factsheets:

FS16b Keeping well and safe at home and FS16c – Are you safe at home?

Further factsheets can be found online at www.devon.gov.uk/factsheets

If you have any further questions please contact **Care Direct 0845 1551 007**

A large print version of this factsheet is available on www.devon.gov.uk/largeprint-factsheets but if you would like it in a different format such as Braille or audio, or in a

different language, please contact our Customer Service Centre on 0845 155 1015 or email customer@devon.gov.uk.

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