

STEPS, STAIRS AND WALKWAYS

Are they in good repair with smooth, safe surfaces?

Once again, the goal is to avoid falls that can result from tripping.

YES NO If NO, where

- ▶▶ Have a qualified person make any necessary repairs.

Are stairs well lit?

Stairs should be lit so that each step, particularly the step edges, can be clearly seen while going up and down stairs. The lighting should not produce glare or shadows along the stairway.

YES NO If NO, where

- ▶▶ Use the maximum wattage bulb allowed by the light fixture (If you do not know the correct wattage, use a bulb no larger than 60 watts.)
- ▶▶ Reduce glare by using frosted bulbs, indirect lighting, shades or globes on light fixtures, or partially closing blinds and curtains.
- ▶▶ Have a qualified person add additional light fixtures. Make sure the light bulbs are the right type and wattage for the light fixture.

Are light switches located at both the top and bottom of the stairs?

Even if your loved one is very familiar with the stairs, lighting is an important factor in preventing falls. They should be able to turn on the lights before they use the stairway from either end.

YES NO If NO, where

- ▶▶ If no other light is available, keep an operating flashlight in a convenient location at the top and bottom of the stairs.
- ▶▶ Install night lights at nearby outlets.
- ▶▶ Consider installing switches at the top and bottom of the stairs.

Do the steps allow secure footing?

Worn treads or loose carpeting can lead to insecure footing resulting in slips or falls.

YES NO If NO, where

- ▶▶ Try to avoid wearing only socks or smooth-soled shoes or slippers when using stairs.
- ▶▶ Make certain the carpet is firmly attached to the steps all along the stairs.
- ▶▶ Consider refinishing or replacing worn treads, or replacing worn carpeting.
- ▶▶ Paint outside steps with paint that has a rough texture, or use abrasive strips.

Are steps even and of the same size and height?

Even a small difference in step surfaces or riser heights can lead to falls.

YES NO If NO, where

- ▶▶ Mark any steps that are especially narrow or have risers that are higher or lower than the others. Be especially careful of these steps when using the stairs.

Are the coverings on the steps in good condition?

Worn or torn coverings or nails sticking out from coverings could snag their foot or cause them to trip.

YES NO If NO, where

- Repair coverings.
- Remove coverings.
- Replace coverings.

Can the edges of the steps be clearly seen?

Falls may occur if the edges of the steps are blurred or hard to see.

YES NO If NO, where

- Paint edges of outdoor steps white to see them better at night.
- Add extra lighting.
- If you plan to carpet the stairs, avoid deep pile carpeting or patterned or dark colored carpeting that can make it difficult to see the edges of the steps clearly.

Are handrails on both sides of the stairway and outside steps, and are they firmly attached?

As people age, they tend to rely more and more on handrails for stability when going up or down stairs.

YES NO If NO, where

- Have a qualified person add any needed handrails and/or make any necessary repairs.
- Make certain to allow enough space between the wall and the handrails so they can be firmly grasped.

Is anything stored on the stairway, even temporarily?

People can trip over objects left on stairs, particularly in the event of an emergency or fire.

YES NO If YES, where

- Remove all objects from the stairway.

Remember to periodically re-check the home.