

50 Safety Tips for Seniors

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Simple steps to increase safety at home and away from home.

A recent study conducted for the National Institute of Aging found that about 22 percent of elderly Americans age 71 and older—about 5.4 million people—are already experiencing some degree of decline in their mental faculties. The problem may not be severe enough to prevent taking care of their daily activities, but it can cause mild difficulty in completing those activities or in making complicated decisions. On a more personal perspective, this could mean elders are going through subtle changes that make them vulnerable to scams or more susceptible to accidents. Safety both in and out of home is a top priority for elders and there are many simple safety steps that will reduce the risk of accidents and abuse.

Fall Prevention Safety

1. 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.
2. Install handrails and lights on staircases, with light switches at the top and bottom of the stairs.
3. Install [shower and tub grab bars](#) in the bathroom, around the toilet and the tub.
4. Place [no-slip mats](#) on the shower floor and bathtub.
5. Paint doorsills with a different, highlighting color to avoid tripping.
6. Put on hip pads if you're at high risk for falls.
7. Make home lighting brighter, but prevent glare.
8. Have your vision checked often and regularly.
9. Ask the doctor to review your medication regularly.
10. Start exercising regularly, especially tai chi or yoga to increase flexibility and strengthen muscles and joints.
11. If you can't stand comfortably, exercise in a chair.

Fire and Kitchen Safety

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

Car Safety

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

Home Safety

31. Put large numbers on your house that you can read easily from the street.
32. 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.
33. Leave a key with a neighbor you trust, in case you are locked out.
34. Set a timer on a radio to make it sound like there's somebody home when you run an errand.
35. Have dead bolts installed on your doors.
36. Lock all doors—especially the front door—when you're working in the attic, basement or yard.
37. Never open the door to a stranger. If it is a repairman or a salesman, call the company they say they work for and verify.
38. If it's someone needing to use the phone, get the number and call it for them.
39. Never tell people you are alone.
40. 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.
41. Limit the number of rooms a visitor can see. Don't show strangers what you have in the house.
42. Make it a habit to be security conscious.

Financial Safety

43. Never leave your purse unattended.
44. Always carry your wallet or any bills in a front pocket, never in a rear pocket.
45. Avoid having large amounts of cash or valuables at home.
46. Tear up or shred all personal and financial information; never just throw it into the trash.
47. 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.
48. If you get calls asking for donations, tell them to send requests by mail; never discuss donations over the phone.
49. Verify the status of a charity before making a donation.
50. Arrange to have Social Security checks direct-deposited to your bank.