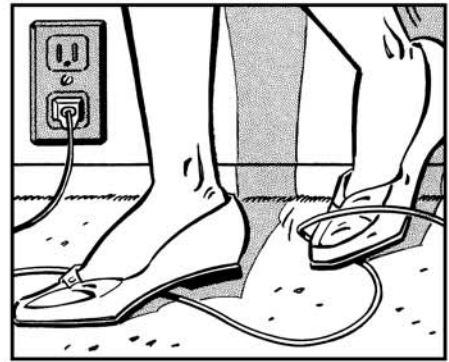


# Floor Alert!

## Slipping and Tripping Hazards



Falls are the leading cause of preventable death in the home. The elderly are most at risk, but babies and preschoolers are close behind them in death and injury statistics. Those who suffer falls may find their mobility—and independence—seriously restricted for the rest of their lives. Precipitous stairways, slippery bathroom floors and snakelike extension cords are the main culprits. Here are some preventive measures you can take in each area of your house to eliminate the risk of falls.

### THE LIVING ROOM

- Whether you use runners over the carpet or have area rugs, tape or tack any curled sides or ends of floor coverings. Heavy-duty, double-sided carpet tape is available at most hardware stores for this purpose. This will also keep such rugs from slipping.
- Clear up clutter on the floor and keep furniture away from doorways. In fact, arrange furniture so that walkways are as wide as possible.
- Secure loose wires and cords, preferably around the edge of the room. Don't allow cords to run through heavy foot traffic areas or under rugs or the legs of furniture.

### BEDROOMS

- Even if you're a "morning person," avoid jumping out of bed as soon as you wake up. Take a moment to get your bearings first by sitting on the side of the bed.
- Children and older people will be safe from falling out of bed if their beds have guard rails.
- Keep all dresser drawers closed when not in use.

### THE BATHROOM

Despite its size, the bathroom is the most dangerous room in the house, especially for the elderly.

- If the floor of the bathroom isn't carpeted, use nonskid bath rugs. They usually have a rubber backing.
- After bathing, dry off in the tub or shower so that you don't drip water on the bathroom floor. Likewise, drip-dry clothes over the tub. Wipe up puddles or condensation on the bathroom floor immediately. Call a plumber as soon as you notice a leak, unless you know how to repair it yourself.
- Use a suction-type rubber mat on the floor of the tub or shower. Otherwise, cover the floor of the tub or shower with individual adhesive appliques.
- Have grab bars installed around the walls of the tub. If you install them yourself, be sure to use long screws and anchor them into the wall studs, not just the tile or plaster.
- Get a stool for the shower if you have difficulty standing.

### THE KITCHEN

- If you don't have a heavy-duty, one-step stool, invest in one. Never stand on a chair for hard-to-reach items.
- Block off a freshly washed or waxed floor until it's dry.
- Mop up spills, leaks and tracked-in water immediately.
- Keep drawers and cupboard doors closed.
- When installing new flooring, avoid glazed tiles. Ask about slip-resistant and nonabsorbent flooring.

### STAIRWAYS

- Make sure all stairways have at least one handrail, preferably two, along their entire length—and use them.
- Make sure you can see exactly where your feet are landing on each step. Otherwise, if a slipping or tripping hazard is left on the stairs, you might step on it.
- Keep ample lighting along the length of the stairs, and make sure light switches are located at both the top and bottom of each stairway. In fact, sufficient lighting throughout the house is crucial. Install at least one light-sensitive or dusk-to-dawn night light in every room.
- Avoid putting throw rugs near stairs.
- Have torn or ripped stairway carpeting repaired or replaced and make sure carpets are securely fastened along their entire length.
- If you have (or host) young children, install U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission-approved child safety gates at the top and bottom of stairs.

### A Word About Shoes

In general, avoid wearing loose slippers or high heels around the house. Walking around in stocking feet is risky, too. Opt for corrugated-sole shoes, sneakers, deck shoes or just about any type of shoe with a good tread on the bottom. Inexpensive, sure-grip pads can also be added to the soles of most shoes at a shoe store.