

Steps and Stairs

Falls at home are the leading cause of accidental death in the United States, particularly among the elderly. Each year, at least one-third of those over 65 fall accidentally. Young children and toddlers also have a higher risk of falls. Keep stairs in good repair so they don't rock, slip or sink when someone steps on them. For those with impaired vision, mark the length of each step with bright or contrasting tape, especially the first and last steps. Here are additional guidelines for step and stair safety.



Tack down any loose or torn carpeting.



Pick up any loose objects you find on stairs immediately.

Carpeting

Many people are injured from falls due to tripping on worn or ripped carpets on stairs. Be sure your stair carpeting is in good condition and securely fastened along its entire length.

Open Stairs

Stairs with no backing, just open, rising steps, may be far enough apart to trap a foot or loose clothing. Attach boards to the back of each step, indoors and outdoors, so that there's no gap between steps.

Lights

A stairway should be well lit along its entire length. Switches for all stairway lights should be located at both the top and bottom of the stairway.

Handrails

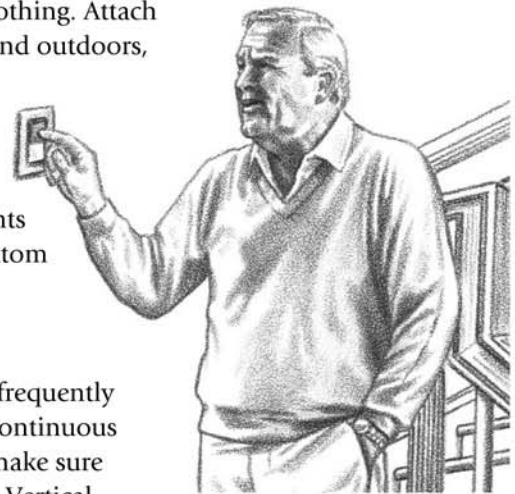
Every stairway, no matter how short or infrequently used, should have at least one solid and continuous handrail. For older people in the house, make sure there are two handrails, one on each side. Vertical handrail supports should be spaced so a child can't stick his or her head between them and get trapped.

Objects on Stairs

Immediately put away any loose objects you find on the stairs. Because of the narrow area of each step, it may be difficult to avoid stepping and slipping on a shoe or a small rubber ball, for instance.

Glass Doors and Stairs

If a door is located at the bottom of a stairway, make sure it isn't made of glass. If someone falls down the stairs, they could crash through a glass door, seriously compounding their injuries.



Relocate switches and install more outlets to avoid walking through dark rooms and tripping over extension cords.