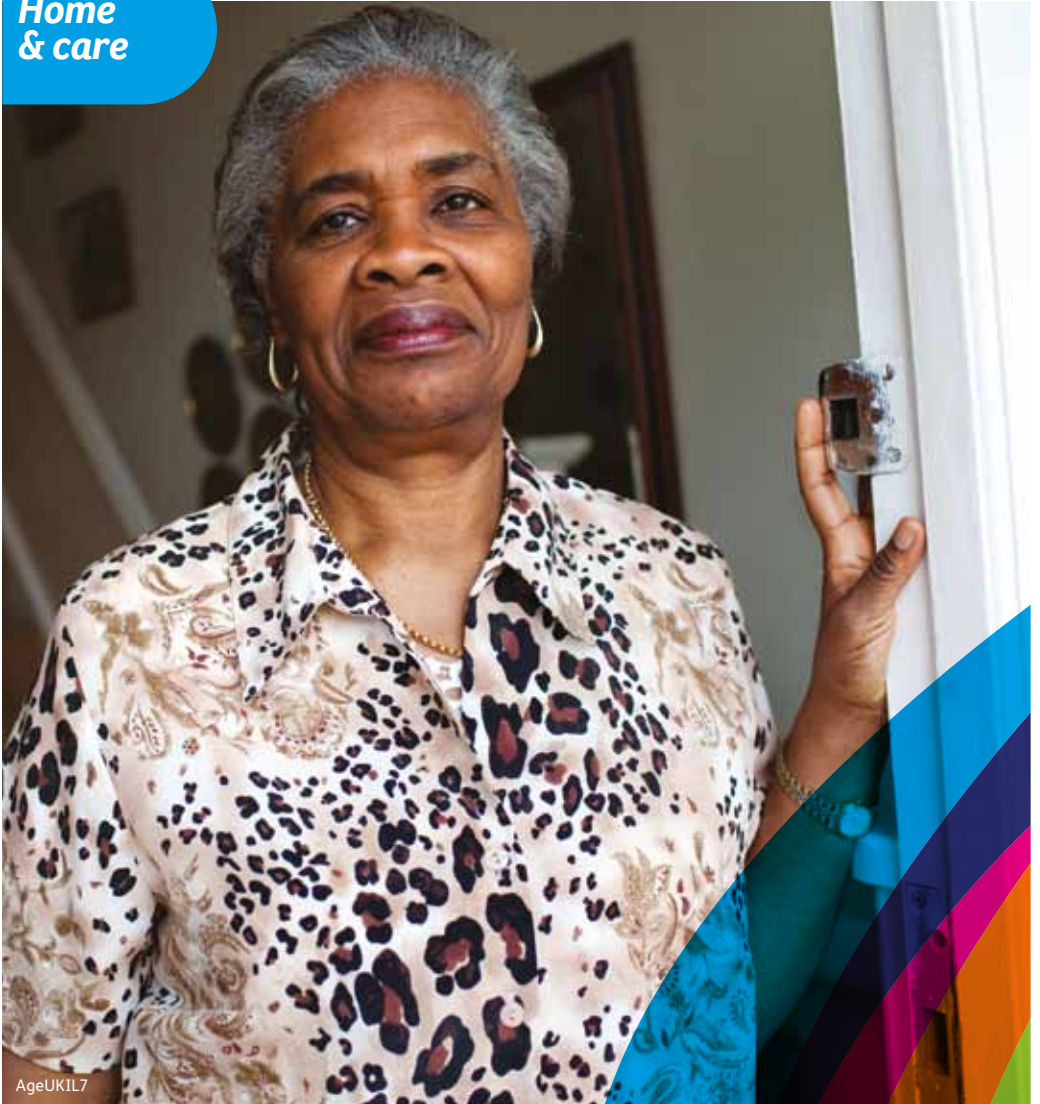


Home safety checker

Staying safe around the house

Home
& care



Age UK is the new force combining Age Concern and Help the Aged.

*With almost 120 years of combined
history to draw on, we are bringing
together our talents, services
and solutions to do more to enrich
the lives of people in later life.*

*The Age UK family includes Age Cymru,
Age NI and Age Scotland. There are
also more than 170 local Age UKs.*

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This leaflet was first published in February 2011 and updated in January 2012. Every effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in this leaflet is correct. However, things do change, so it is always a good idea to seek expert advice on your personal situation.

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Age UK is the new force combining

AGE
Concern

HELPTHEAGED WE WILL



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Introduction

It's important that we feel safe in our homes, yet more accidents happen at home than anywhere else. We've put together this leaflet to help you do a safety check of your home. By working through the checklists, you should be able to identify and resolve any possible safety risks, and help prevent accidents.

Throughout this leaflet you will find suggestions for organisations that can give further information and advice about your options. Their contact details can be found in the 'Useful organisations' section (see pages 15–18). Contact details for local organisations can usually be found in your local phone book. If you have difficulty finding them, your local Age UK should be able to help (see page 15).

As far as possible, the information given in this guide is applicable across the UK.

Key

what
next?

This symbol indicates who to contact for the next steps you need to take.

General safety check for around the home

Here are a few general safety checks and some tips on how to make sure that your home is safe.

Are your floors clear of trailing flexes?

To avoid tripping over cords or wires, coil them up or tape them close to the wall. If you can, organise your appliances so that they are close to a socket.

Are you careful not to overload sockets?

Overloaded sockets can be a fire hazard. If you don't have enough sockets, use a bar adapter on a lead, rather than a block adapter. But for appliances that use a lot of power, like a fridge or washing machine, never fit more than one plug in each socket.

Can you walk through your rooms without having to walk around furniture?

Rearranging your furniture can help you to move around your home more easily.

Do you have good lighting?

Good lighting is particularly important on the stairs, where it can help you to avoid tripping. Make sure that your light bulbs are bright and come on straight away.

Do you have worn out or fraying carpets that you might trip over?

Replacing them or using double-sided carpet tape will help prevent them slipping. Loose rugs and mats can be a trip hazard and should be avoided if possible.

Do you use a step ladder to change light bulbs?

Step ladders give stability and safety when changing a light bulb or reaching for something high up. Never use a ladder when you're on your own.

Can you call for help if you fall or feel unsafe?

A community alarm lets you contact a 24-hour response centre at the touch of a button. Many councils run community alarm schemes. Age UK also provides community alarms. For more information about the service and the likely costs call 0800 77 22 66.

Do you have an easy-to-read list of emergency phone numbers beside each phone?

List details of important contacts, close friends, relatives and anyone else you think may be useful.

Do you have a carbon-monoxide detector?

Carbon monoxide is known as a 'silent killer' because you can't see, taste or smell it. Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning can be similar to cold, flu or food-poisoning symptoms – headache, feeling sick, sore throat and dry cough. Heaters that burn gas, coal, oil or wood can give off carbon monoxide if they are not working properly. Look for a detector bearing the kitemark and European Standard number BS EN 50291. If you suspect that carbon monoxide is present, call National Grid on 0800 111 999.

Have you organised a yearly gas appliances check?

A yearly gas appliance check can ensure that your appliances are working safely. Make sure that the check or any repairs are done by a Gas Safe-registered engineer (see page 16). If you're a tenant, your landlord is legally required to arrange a safety check, at least once a year, for the gas appliances that they have provided. If you're an owner occupier, you may qualify for a free, annual safety check from your energy supplier, but you will have to register on their Priority Service Register. Ask your supplier for details.

Do you have a letterbox cage?

This can save you having to stoop to pick up your post. It can also stop papers being spread across the floor, which could cause you to slip.

Do your slippers fit properly?

Worn out or badly fitting slippers can increase your risk of falling. Be careful when wearing any long, loose-fitting clothing in case you trip, particularly when climbing the stairs.

When opening the door to a caller, do you lock, stop, chain and check?

Put the chain on and ask for ID. If in doubt, keep them out. If you are suspicious of a caller, dial 999 and ask for the police. Only chain your front door when you are planning to open it. Keeping a chain on all the time may prevent services from entering in an emergency.

Safety in the bedroom

Do you have sheets and bed covers trailing on the floor?

Tuck them out of the way so they don't trip you up when you're moving around.

Do you have a bedside lamp or torch?

This can help if you need to get up in the night, or if there is a power failure.

Do you have an electric blanket?

You should get your electric blanket tested by an expert at least every three years, and replace it every ten years. Check for danger signs, such as frayed fabric and scorch marks. Check whether you have the type of blanket that can be left on overnight – if not, always unplug it when you go to bed. Never switch it on if it's damp or wet, and never use it with a hot-water bottle.

You should get your electric blanket tested by an expert at least every three years.



Safety in the kitchen

Is there clear counter space around or near the cooker?

This will allow you to put hot pots and pans down safely.

Are the things you use every day within easy reach?

Rearrange your shelves and cupboards so that the things you use most often can be reached easily, or use long-handled 'grabbers' to avoid stretching.

Are pan handles turned away from the front of the cooker?

Face pan handles towards the sides of your cooker to stop them being knocked over, and keep them away from the other heat rings.

Do you use a timer to remind yourself when food is ready?

Always set a timer so you don't forget about your cooking. Some microwaves have timers that can be used independently of the oven. Never leave hot oil unattended as it is a fire risk.

Is there a risk that you could slip on wet flooring?

Try to clean up any spills straight away. Non-slip matting can help reduce the risk of slipping.

Are flammable items kept away from the hob?

Make sure that tea towels, kitchen roll, oven gloves and paper bags are kept away from the cooker.

Do you keep your kitchen equipment as clean as possible?

A build-up of crumbs or grease, for instance, could be a fire risk.

Do you know what to do if a pan catches fire?

Don't move the pan or throw water on it. Turn off the heat, if it is safe to do so. Do not try to put the fire out yourself using a wet tea towel, as you risk injuring yourself. Leave the kitchen, close the door and shout to everyone else in the house to leave. Call 999.

If you have a gas boiler with a pilot light, do you regularly check that the pilot light is burning?

If you find it has gone out, there should be instructions on the boiler on how to relight it. If you cannot relight it yourself, call a heating engineer out. Make sure your engineer is Gas Safe-registered.

Always set a timer so you don't forget about your cooking. Some microwaves have timers that can be used independently of the oven.

Safety on the stairs

Are your stairs free from clutter?

Avoid storing things on the stairs, even temporarily.

Do you have solid handrails, preferably on both sides?

You should have handrails on all staircases, even on small flights.

Do you have a two-way light switch?

This means a light switch at the top and bottom of the stairs. You should contact an electrician to fit one if you don't.

Can you easily see the edges of each step?

Marking the edge of each step with paint or non-slip masking tape will make them more visible. Make sure that the tape doesn't become a trip hazard.

Do you have plug-in night lights?

These turn on automatically at night time and provide a low light that can help you see your way to the bathroom or on the stairs if you get up at night.

Do you have emergency power-failure lights?

These lights plug in to power sockets and remain lit if there is a power failure. This means that if the mains power fails after dark, you will still be able to find your way around. Keep a torch on hand to use during a power failure, too.

Safety in the bathroom

Do you have a hand rail, non-slip bath mat and bath seat?

These can help you to keep your balance when getting in and out of the bath. Make sure your bath mat is secure and doesn't slide on the floor when you walk on it – get a non-slip rubber mat or use self-stick strips. If you're having new flooring fitted, make sure it's non-slip. If you find it difficult getting in and out of the bath safely, contact the occupational therapy department of your local social services to ask for an assessment. If you need help fitting a hand rail, or with other small home adaptations, see if there's a Handyperson scheme in your area (see page 16).

Are your medicines stored in the bottle they came in, out of reach of children and pets, and locked away?

The label will have information about what the medicine is and how often to take it. It will also have the phone number of the pharmacy so that you can call if you have any questions. Clear out your medicine cabinet regularly and ask your local chemist to dispose of out-of-date or unwanted medications for you.

Are your mains-powered electrical appliances kept out of the bathroom?

Appliances like hairdryers, heaters (unless fitted with a cord pull) and mains-powered radios should never be used in the bathroom.

Contact your local council to see whether it can provide you with bathroom safety equipment or financial help towards the cost. Our free guide *Adapting your home* and free factsheet *Funding repairs, improvements and adaptations* have more information.

Safety in the garden

Are your paths clear of leaves and overgrowing plants?

Keeping your garden tidy and free of obstacles will make it a lot safer.

Are your paving stones free from moss and algae?

Moss and algae become very slippery when wet. Prevent them growing by pruning overhanging branches to improve the light and air circulation. You can clear them using a power washer.

Do you take extra care if you have to go out in icy weather?

Spread salt or sand on your steps if you need to go outside. Some councils offer a free bag of salt or sand to every household each winter, but you may need to collect it. Shoes and boots with good grip will also help you to walk confidently in icy conditions. Consider buying ice grippers to wear over your footwear.

If you use a ladder, is it at a safe angle and anchored at its base?

Never use a ladder when you are on your own; it is far safer to have someone with you who can hold the ladder steady.

Do you lock tools away once you have finished using them?

Always use tools carefully and place them in a safe position when you put them down.

Do you use a power point fitted with a residual current device (RCD) when using power tools and electric mowers?

An RCD will shut off the power if an electrical fault develops or if you accidentally cut through the flex.

Do you store weed killer safely?

Prevent accidental poisoning by carefully following the instructions when using weed killers. Never transfer them to a different bottle as this could cause confusion.

Fire safety

Do you smoke?

If so, use deep ashtrays and stub each cigarette out properly. Never smoke in bed.

Do you have a smoke alarm on each floor?

It is vital to have one bearing the British Standard number BS 5446 and the kitemark. Test it monthly and keep it free from dust. Change the battery at least once a year. There are also special smoke alarms for people with hearing difficulties – contact Action on Hearing Loss (see page 16) to find out more.

Have you planned a fire escape route?

Preparing and planning an escape route can save valuable time in a fire. If you live in a flat, make sure corridors and stairs are free from clutter. If there is an alternative escape route, check you know how to use it.

Have you planned a Home Fire Risk Check?

Contact your local fire brigade to see whether it offers a Home Fire Risk Check; it can help you install smoke alarms, plan escape routes and assess other hazards.

If you have an open fire, do you use a fire guard?

Fire guards let you safely enjoy the benefits of a fire.

Are you careful to never dry clothes over or near a fire?

Drying clothes near a fire or other heater can be a fire risk.

Preparing and planning an escape route can save valuable time in a fire. If you live in a flat, make sure corridors and stairs are free from clutter. If there is an alternative escape route, check you know how to use it.



Useful organisations

Age UK

Age UK is the new force combining Age Concern and Help the Aged. We provide advice and information for people in later life through our Age UK Advice line, publications and online.

Age UK Advice: 0800 169 65 65

Lines are open seven days a week from 8am to 7pm.

www.ageuk.org.uk

Call Age UK Advice to find out whether there is a local Age UK near you, and to order free copies of our information guides and factsheets.

In Wales, contact

Age Cymru: 0800 169 65 65

www.agecymru.org.uk

In Northern Ireland, contact

Age NI: 0808 808 7575

www.ageni.org

In Scotland, contact

Age Scotland: 0845 125 9732

www.agescotland.org.uk

For products and services for the over-50s, including home insurance and personal alarms, call 0800 169 18 19. Age UK also provides community alarms – for more information about the service and the likely costs call 0800 77 22 66.

Action on Hearing Loss (formerly RNID)

Provides information about the services and equipment available to deaf and hard-of-hearing people.

Tel: 0808 808 0123 (freephone) or 0808 808 9000 (textphone)

Email: informationline@hearingloss.org.uk

www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk

Disabled Living Foundation

Provides impartial advice on products and equipment that help with daily living.

Tel: 0845 130 9177

www.dlf.org.uk

Emergencies

If you smell gas, call the gas emergency number on 0800 111 999 (National Grid).

In Northern Ireland, call 0800 002 001.

Gas Safe Register

You can check if an engineer is on the register by visiting the website: www.gassaferegister.co.uk

Tel: 0800 408 5500

Email: enquiries@gassaferegister.co.uk

Handyperson scheme

The Age UK Group offers Handyperson schemes to older people in some areas who meet certain criteria, to assist with small repairs and reduce risks in the home. Call Age UK Advice on 0800 169 65 65 to find out whether it operates in your area.

Home improvement agencies

Help older home-owners and private tenants organise repairs, improvements and adaptations to their homes.

The environmental health or housing department of your council, or a local Citizens Advice Bureau, should be able to tell you if there is a home improvement agency in your area.

In England, contact

Foundations

Tel: 0845 864 5210

Email: foundations@cel.co.uk

www.foundations.uk.com

In Northern Ireland, contact

Fold

Tel: 028 9042 8314

Email: info@foldgroup.co.uk

www.foldgroup.co.uk

In Scotland, contact

Care and Repair Scotland

Tel: 0141 221 9879

www.careandrepairsotland.co.uk

In Wales, contact

Care and Repair Cymru

Tel: 0300 111 3333

Email: enquiries@careandrepair.org.uk

www.careandrepair.org.uk

National Association for Professional Inspectors and Testers (NAPIT)

Can provide details of qualified electricians and installers.

Tel: 0845 543 0330

www.napit.org.uk (go to 'find a member' to search)

RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents)

Provides detailed advice on specific safety problems.

Tel: 0121 248 2000

Email: help@rospa.org.uk

www.rospa.org.uk

Some fire and rescue services offer a Home Fire Risk Check (HFRC) where they carry out a survey of your home and give you simple advice on fire-safety issues. Get in touch with your local authority (council) to find out how to register for a check.

Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)

Provides a range of services, advice and leaflets for partially-sighted and blind people.

Royal National Institute of Blind People
105 Judd Street
London WC1H 9NE

Tel: 0303 123 9999

Email: helpline@rnib.org.uk

www.rnib.org.uk

Can you help Age UK?

Please complete the donation form below with a gift of whatever you can afford and return to: Age UK, FREEPOST LON13041, PO Box 203, London N1 9BR. Alternatively, you can phone 0800 169 87 87 or visit www.ageuk.org.uk/donate. If you prefer, you can donate directly to one of our national or local partners. Thank you.

Personal details

Title:	Initials:	Surname:
Address:		
Postcode:		
Tel:	Email:	

By providing your email address and/or mobile number you are agreeing to us contacting you in these ways. You may contact us at any time to unsubscribe from our communications.

Your gift

I would like to make a gift of: £

I enclose a cheque/postal order made payable to Age UK

Card payment

I wish to pay by (please tick) MasterCard Visa CAF CharityCard
 Maestro American Express

(Maestro only)

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	Signature X
Expiry date	<input type="text"/>	/	<input type="text"/>	Issue no. (Maestro only)	<input type="text"/>	

Gift Aid declaration

(please tick) Yes, I want Age UK and its partner organisations* to treat all donations I have made for the four years prior to this year, and all donations I make from the date of this declaration until I notify you otherwise, as gift aid donations. I confirm I pay an amount of income tax and/or capital gains tax at least equal to the tax that the charity will reclaim on my donations in the tax year. Date: ___/___/___ (please complete). *Age Cymru, Age Scotland and Age NI



We will use the information you have supplied to communicate with you in line with Data Protection guidelines. Age UK (registered charity no 1128267) comprises the Charity, its group of companies and national partners (Age Cymru, Age Scotland and Age NI). If you would prefer not to hear from them or carefully selected third parties, let us know by phoning 0800 107 8977.

You may be interested in other guides in this range

- Adapting your home
- Advice for carers
- Care at home
- Care home checklist
- Care homes
- Housing options
- Personal budgets
- Retiring abroad
- Staying safe



To order any of our **free** publications, please call Age UK Advice free on:

0800 169 65 65

www.ageuk.org.uk/homeandcare

What should I do now?

For more information on the issues covered in this guide, or to order any of our publications, please call Age UK Advice free on **0800 169 65 65** or visit www.ageuk.org.uk/homeandcare

Our publications are also available in large print and audio formats.

The following Age UK information guides may be useful:

- *Avoiding scams*
- *Staying safe*
- *Staying steady*

The Age UK Group offers a wide range of products and services specially designed for people in later life. For more information, please call **0800 169 18 19**.

If contact details for your local Age UK are not in the box below, call Age UK Advice free on **0800 169 65 65**.

