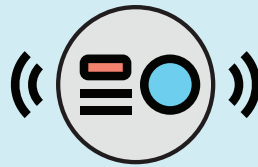


Home safety



Falls



Carbon monoxide



Medication management



Burns and scalds



Fire



DIY and garden safety

On average two people die every week in Northern Ireland as a result of an accident in the home. More accidents happen in the home than anywhere else. There are countless home safety hazards – being aware of them is the first step to preventing accidents.

This leaflet includes some of the most common home accidents and offers tips on how to help prevent them.

Falls

As we get older the risk of falling can increase. Physical injury such as a fracture is an obvious result but a loss of confidence can come after a fall and affect our independence.

There are a number of factors that can contribute to a fall - here are a few tips to reduce the risks.

- Remove tripping hazards, such as loose or worn mats and trailing leads or wires. Keep your stairs free of clutter.
- Ensure your home is well lit and always put lights on when getting up during the night.
- Keep the floors dry to prevent any slipping.
- If you use non-slip bath or shower mats, ensure they are cleaned regularly to avoid a build-up of soap scum.
- Have broken or uneven pathways outdoors repaired.
- Keep a mobile or cordless phone handy in case of emergency and to avoid rushing to answer it.
- Ensure mobility aids are in good working order. If they need attention contact the provider.
- Avoid wearing loose slippers or footwear without backs.
- Feet can change in size and shape as you age. Always get your feet measured when buying new shoes. If you have problems with your feet, please contact your GP or podiatrist.
- Arrange everyday items in easy to reach places so you don't have to climb to reach them.
- Use a helping hand device to avoid bending or over-reaching.
- If you do have to reach up high, use suitable well supported low steps/ step ladder with a handle to hold on to.



What to do if you fall?

Hurt or feel unable to get up?

- Use a pendant alarm if you have one or crawl towards your phone and dial 999.
- Call out for help or bang on the wall.
- Move to a soft surface such as a carpet and keep warm by finding something to cover you.
- Don't lie in one position for too long as you may get cold or could develop a pressure sore. Roll from side to side and move your arms and legs if possible

Unhurt and feel able to try to get up?

- Roll onto hands and knees and crawl to a stable piece of furniture such as a bed or chair.
- With hands on the support, place one foot flat on the floor, bending your knee in front of your stomach.
- Lean forwards, push on your hands and feet, and bring your feet together.
- Slowly turn and sit.
- Rest before slowly getting up.

Seek medical attention after a fall, especially if you are in pain or have hit your head.



Eyesight and medication

- Eyes should be tested every two years, or every year if over 70.
- Eye tests are free for those over 60 and some opticians can provide home visits.
- Some medicines can cause side effects (dizziness, drowsiness or unsteadiness), increasing the risk of a fall. If this is the case contact your GP or pharmacist to review your medication.
- Always take medicine as directed,

read the labels and warnings to ensure medications are not mixed up or mistakenly taken for something else.

- A pill dispenser/organiser can be used to manage medication safely.
- If having difficulty managing medication your pharmacist may be able to arrange your prescription in to pre-prepared packs.

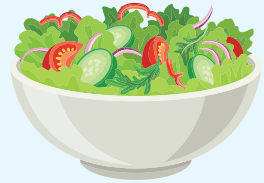


Mobility

- If you are having difficulty using the stairs, bathroom or external door steps you may benefit from an Occupational Therapy (OT) home assessment. Interventions may include advice, equipment and adaptations such as handrails.
- Ask your GP or Council's Home Safety Officer to refer you or you can self-refer to your local HSC Trust OT.
- Contact your GP if you are experiencing changes in your mobility.



- Your local HSC Trust provides a falls screening service that you can self-refer to: www.nidirect.gov.uk/conditions/falls
- Maintain good bone health by eating a balanced diet that includes calcium rich foods and Vitamin D (oily fish, milk, cheese and fortified cereals). Stopping smoking will also help.
- Regular exercise such as walking or gardening will help with strength and balance. www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/physical-activity
- Check what classes your local council leisure services offer.



Getting help in an emergency

- Mobile phones are great to keep with us. Ensure they are charged but for fire safety do not charge them overnight.
- Smart phones often have voice dialling that can be enabled to allow a call even if you cannot reach it. These can be paired with smart watches or speakers to enable calls to be made.
- A pendant or wrist worn alarm button (these should be worn

all the time) allows you to connect to an operator

or to a contact at the press of a button. These are usually part of a subscription service available from a number of operators.

- Call 999 in an emergency.



In the kitchen

- Where possible, use the back rings on your cooker hob. Turn the handles of the pots or pans away from the edge of the cooker and don't leave them unattended.
- Before moving hot items from the hob or oven make sure there is sufficient heatproof space to easily set them down.
- Arrange kitchen cupboards so that frequently used items are easy to reach.
- If you struggle to lift your kettle, fill it with less water or use a

kettle tipping device. Travel size kettles can boil enough for 1 or 2 cups and are much lighter to lift.



- Don't overload sockets - kettles, toasters, heaters, irons and microwaves should be plugged directly into the wall socket rather than an adaptor.
- Avoid running dishwashers, washing machines and tumble driers overnight or when out of the home.

When children come to visit

Many people spend more time helping out with family child care which means that we now need to view our homes from a child's point of view again.

- Keep all medicines, matches, lighters, e-cigarettes and household chemicals out of reach or locked away.
- Move items that pose a choking hazard or that contain magnets or button cell batteries out of reach.
- Do not drink hot beverages while holding a baby or child. A hot drink can scald up to 20 minutes after being made.



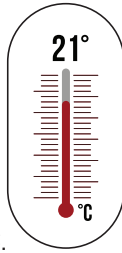
- Looped window blind cords should be kept out of reach as they pose a strangulation risk.
- Keep beds and cots or anything that could be climbed upon away from windows.



For more information visit the child safety section on the British Blind & Shutter Association website www.bbsa.org.uk

Keeping warm and healthy

- People are more likely to have a fall if they are cold. A cold home can lead to other issues such as damp and mould.
- Aim for a temperature in the home of 18°C to 21°C.
- Never fill hot water bottles with boiling water. Replace after two years as the rubber deteriorates.
- There are grants available to help improve the energy efficiency of the home.



- Call the Energy Advice line on 0800 111 4455
- Visit www.nihe.gov.uk/housing-help/ni-energy-advice
- Ensure you are receiving the social security benefits you are entitled to by contacting:
Department for Communities
'Make the Call' Service
0800 232 1271
Age NI Advice Service
0808 808 7575
Community Advice
www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/northern-ireland/

Garden and DIY safety

- Maintain pathways and steps, get pot-holes or cracks repaired. Clear moss and wet leaves to reduce the risk of slipping.
- Ensure places where you will be walking are well lit at night.
- Keep chemicals in their original containers.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions when using substances like weed killers and fertiliser.
- Wear suitable stable footwear and necessary protective equipment when using tools. Follow instructions provided.
- Only use barbecues, gas space heaters and fire pits outdoors and never leave unsupervised.

- Always use an RCD (power breaker) with electrical equipment used outside and be aware of trailing cables.
- Avoid working at height. If you feel capable be sure to use a suitable ladder that gives you a stable platform and something to hold on to. Check the ladder's weight rating and condition before using it.
- Don't tackle a job unless you really have the ability, correct tools and competence.
- Always use a qualified person to carry out gas and electrical work.



Fires

There are lots of fire hazards in the home. Careless disposal of smoking materials is the biggest cause of accidental fire deaths in Northern Ireland. Smoke alarms should be tested once a week.

- Have a night-time routine - disconnect all electrical appliances that are not suitable to leave running 24/7 and close all internal doors. Closed doors help prevent the spread of fire and smoke.
- Candles should be located on a heat proof surface away from anything that can catch fire. Never leave candles unattended - put them out as part of your nighttime routine.
- Take care when using portable gas or electric heaters. Ensure they are safely located and safety tested.
- Take care smoking, especially if you are drowsy, taking prescription drugs or if you have been drinking alcohol. Don't ever smoke in bed as your bedding could easily catch fire. Make sure cigarettes are extinguished using proper ashtrays. Keep matches and lighters out of reach of children.
- Old, damaged or faulty electric blankets are a fire hazard. Keep



all electric blankets flat or roll loosely when storing away – never fold. Always fit an electric blanket as advised in the instructions. Look out for a third-party certification mark to ensure it meets the latest British or European safety standards. An example to look for is the BEAB Approved Mark. Only leave a blanket switched on all night if it has a setting for safe all-night use.



- Do not use hot water bottles along with an electric blanket as this could cause electrocution.
- Keep items such as glass ornaments, magnifying glasses, mirrors and other reflective surfaces out of direct sunlight.
- For more advice on fire safety and to check if you are eligible for a free Home Fire Safety Check, see www.nifrs.org If you do not have internet access you can telephone 028 9266 4221.



Carbon monoxide



Known as the 'silent killer', as you cannot smell, see or taste it. Carbon monoxide fumes can come from any appliance that burns oil, solid fuel, wood or gas.

- A carbon monoxide alarm should be located according to manufacturer's guidelines.
- It is recommended you replace your carbon monoxide alarm in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions - this may be approximately every five to seven years.
- Batteries in detectors will have a limited lifespan. Mark a date for battery replacement.
- To protect from carbon monoxide poisoning, all boilers and fuel burning appliances must be serviced annually using a qualified engineer registered with the appropriate organisation.
- For further advice, visit the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland's website: www.hseni.gov.uk/watchout

Home safety support

- For further information on safety at home, visit pha.site/safety-home
- Local councils offer free home safety checks to people aged over 65 and vulnerable adults. The check offers guidance on all aspects of home safety, as well as free safety equipment (subject to eligibility and availability).
- Please contact your local council and ask for the Home Safety team. Find contact details for councils in Northern Ireland at www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/local-councils-in-northern-ireland



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