

## Caregiver's Corner

### Creating a Safer Home Environment

Edited By Zanda Hilger, adapting various other resources from professionals and online on behalf of Area Agency on Aging Family Caregiver Education

Making home safer for an older adult who has difficulty walking, seeing clearly, or some other disabling condition means making a home safer for everyone who lives in the house. Since falls in older adults accounts for the leading cause of disability and impairment for older adults, often a few simple adjustments will prevent injury. Changes made now can also prepare for the future to accommodate increasing disability.

#### *Simple home changes*

1. Remove unnecessary furniture.
2. Arrange the remaining furniture to allow enough space for someone to walk through easily and wide enough for a walker or wheelchair.
3. Don't rearrange furniture after the person in your care has grown accustomed to its placement without their knowledge and consideration of their preference.
4. Adjust furniture so it will not move if leaned on.
5. Ensure that a favorite chair has armrests that are long enough to help the person get up and down.
6. Remove stacks of books, newspapers and other hazards.
7. Move low tables and barriers out of the pathway.
8. Cushion sharp corners on furniture, cabinets, and vanities using tape or thin padding.
9. Make chair seats 20" high. (Place wood blocks or a wooden platform under large, heavy furniture.)
10. Increase lighting; especially at night by using automatic night-lights in hallways, kitchen and other areas the person may need during the night.
11. Check smoke alarm batteries at least twice a year.
12. Place a fire extinguisher in the kitchen.
13. Consider the need for monitors and intercoms. If installed, does the person know how to use the equipment?
14. Place non-skid tape on the edges of stairs to create contrast that someone can see clearly to prevent falling.
15. Set the telephone to ring the maximum number of times to avoid rushing to answer the phone.
16. Leave the answering machine on high volume so the person can hear and screen incoming messages.
17. Call a carpenter for safety suggestions such as installing railings in places where a person might need extra support or other safety ideas.
18. For other safety suggestions, ask the doctor.

#### **Meals-on-Wheels of Johnson and Ellis Counties**

**For information about home-delivered meals, help with transportation, or to schedule a caregiver seminar or presentation at your library, church, company, or**

**group:**

Call (817) 558-2840 or (972) 351-9943 email [info@mowjec.org](mailto:info@mowjec.org)