

**HERE'S  
TO YOUR  
HEALTH!**

# Injury Prevention at Home

**According to  
the National  
Safety Council,  
each year  
seven million  
Americans  
suffer disabling  
injuries and  
another 28,800  
die as a result  
of injuries  
that happen  
at home.**

**E**ach year in Colorado, it is estimated that one in ten people will seek medical treatment for injuries. For some, the injury causes temporary pain and inconvenience, but for many individuals, the injury leads to chronic pain, disability, a change in lifestyle or even death. Fortunately, there are many things you can do to reduce the risk of injury to yourself and your family.

It is common to label injuries as “accidents.” Yes, accidents happen – but they don’t just happen by chance. Most of them happen for a reason. You can protect your health and your family’s health by understanding why injuries occur, recognizing potentially harmful situations and taking action to prevent injuries.

A good place to start is in your home. While we like to think of our home as the one place where we can let our guard down and relax in comfort and safety, the fact is many things in your home can be hazardous to your health.

**Falls are the most common form of injury in the home and are the leading cause of home injury deaths.**

Protect yourself and your family by inspecting each room in your home and



taking the following simple, low-cost steps, recommended by the Home Safety Council, to make safety a priority and prevent falls.

## Floors

Floor coverings and obstacles can pose hazards. To reduce risk of tripping or slipping:

- Remove scatter rugs or replace them with a low nap rug with non-slip backing.
- Secure scatter rugs and edges of area rugs with adhesive carpet tape or non-skid matting under the rugs.
- Remove or relocate electrical cords that are stretched across walkways.
- Organize the house and clean up items or furniture cluttering primary traffic paths.



**Tri-County  
Health  
Department**

Eleven offices along the front range serving the residents of Adams, Arapahoe and Douglas Counties  
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**Falls are the leading cause of hospitalized traumatic brain injuries for children ages 5 and younger and for adults ages 55 and older.**

*(Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Injury in Colorado, 2000)*

## **Stairs**

Stairs, even those with just two or three steps, pose significant hazards that require attention.

- Add properly shaped handrails to both sides of all stairs, including those on the exterior of the house, even if they have only two or three steps.
- Often the existing handrail is hard to grip. Install handrails that are round or oval in shape. Of course, hold on to the handrails whenever going up or down stairs.
- Check your stair carpet regularly for loose or torn areas; re-secure or replace loose carpet.
- Use reflective or contrasting tape at the front edge of each step to make them more visible.

## **Lighting**

A darkened entrance or a poorly lit stairway, hallway or room can be hazardous, particularly for older adults.

- Replace outside light fixtures with motion-detecting lighting that will automatically illuminate when movement is detected.
- Use a light-sensitive fixture or add-on device that will turn on at dusk.
- Replace standard wall-mounted light switches with movement detecting versions that will automatically turn on lights when someone enters the area.
- Use glow-in-the-dark switches to make finding switches at night easier.
- Use night lights in hallways, bathrooms and bedrooms.
- Keep a flashlight in a convenient location to use as a portable light source.

## **Bathroom**

Many falls occur in the bathroom because wet surfaces are slippery.

- Have grab bars in showers, tub areas and near toilets. Don't substitute towel bars or wall-mounted soap dishes as grab bars; they can easily come loose and cause a fall.
- Use a low nap rubber-backed bath mat to absorb water and reduce slipping due to wet floors.
- Use a non-slip mat in the tub or shower.
- Use a hand-held shower, installed within reach of everyone in the household.
- Use waterproof seats or chairs with arm rests and backs in the tub or shower. These will allow the user – particularly elderly, physically frail or less agile users – to bathe or shower more safely.

This is not an all-inclusive list of home hazards. Inspect your home regularly and customize your safety measures to meet the needs dictated by the age, condition, design and features of your home. Such things as fireplaces, hot tubs, and decks require additional safety provisions. Take advantage of community programs that offer free home safety assessments, particularly for households with children or older adults.

**For more information  
on home injury  
prevention, go to  
[www.homesafetycouncil.org](http://www.homesafetycouncil.org)**