



Home Safety for Seniors

By Rick Bunzel

Mountain View Property Inspections

The majority of seniors want to live in their own homes for as long as possible. However, many homes are not designed to meet their changing needs as they age. For example, most homes lack rails or grab handles that will help prevent a fall. As people grow older, the consequences of a fall grow more serious. AARP studies show 50% of senior patients admitted for a fall injury, will die within one year. In addition, fractures from falls are a leading cause of disability and often result in entering a nursing home. Most falls happen in the home and could have been avoided. Factors such as poor lighting, narrow stairs, and slippery surfaces can increase the chances of a fall. In addition, problems with glare and depth perception, reduced fitness leading to weakened muscles, or prescription medicines that might cause dizziness or tiredness can result in a fall.

Seniors will benefit from home modifications to suit their present or future requirements, such as handrails or grab bars, wheelchair ramps, lighting, alterations to bathrooms, improvements to existing doorways or other access areas, and some exterior work. In bathrooms where many falls occur, add grab bars to the shower and around the toilet. Raised handicap toilets or raised toilet seats make getting on or off easier. In the tub, consider a bath bench or a secure stool which will making getting in and out easier. A removable showerhead on an extension hose makes bathing easier especially if using a bath bench. Add a non-slip surface or rubber mat to the bottom of the tub.

The correct level of lighting in a home plays a important role in making it safe. In many cases the appropriate lights exist but are not used. Motion detector switches are now available which will alleviate that problem. Add these switches to hallways and bathrooms to automatically light those areas. Inexpensive automatic night-lights are also available to light steps or hallways. Lighting in main areas can be placed on timers set to switch on at dusk and off at bedtime.

The kitchen is another area where accidents can occur. Position frequently used items in easily accessible areas. Provide electrical outlets for small appliances in more convenient locations. Install lever-type faucets, or a faucet with a single lever to control flow and temperature. Set the water heater to provide 120-degree water to avoiding scalding burns. If the senior is in a wheel chair, lower the kitchen cupboards for easier access and install "D" type handles on doors or drawers. Install a smoke alarm outside, but close to, the kitchen. Make sure the unit has a "hush button." Install a fire extinguisher near the kitchen exit.

Older people typically live in older homes in greater need of maintenance. Consider enlisting the services of a handyman who can do preventative maintenance that will help keep older homeowners safer and in many cases, happier.

Rick Bunzel is the Principle Inspector at Mountain View Property Inspections. If you would like to know more about your home go to **WWW.MVPinspection.com** If you have questions or comments, Rick Bunzel can be contacted at Mountain View Property Inspections @ 303-443-9063 or MVPInspection@attbi.com