

12 steps to stair safety at home



Seniors are more at risk for falling on stairs than younger adults, and more likely to suffer severe injuries. In fact, seniors 65+ account for 70% of the deaths resulting from stair accidents.

Take a few minutes to review the safety of your stairs and how you use them.

- 1. Is there a light switch at the top and bottom of your stairs?**
Install lights and switches to ensure all your stairways are well lit.
- 2. Are all your steps in good repair?**
Make sure there are no uneven surfaces, cracks, bunched-up stair-covering or protruding nails.
- 3. Are the steps all of the same size and height?**
Have a carpenter correct uneven steps. They are a major hazard.
- 4. Are you able to see the edges of the steps clearly?**
Paint a contrasting colour on the edge of wooden or concrete steps (or on the top and bottom steps), or apply special strips you can buy to enhance the visibility of each step.
- 5. If you have a covering on your stairs, is it fastened securely?**
Stair carpeting can cause slips. Consider removing it or replacing it with well-secured rubber stair treading.
- 6. Is the handrail well attached to the wall and easily grasped?**
Make sure the handrail is well-secured and that you can get your full hand around it.
- 7. Is the handrail at a height of 34 to 38 inches (86 to 97 cm)?**
There should be a handrail on at least one side of all stairways. The height should allow you to use it comfortably when your arm is slightly bent at the elbow.
- 8. Are your stairs free of clutter?**
Avoid storing things temporarily on your stairs. Always check the stairs as you walk up or down.
- 9. Have you removed loose carpets or throw rugs from your stair landings?**
Loose floor coverings are a hazard. If you have rugs make sure they are non-slip, or have a rubber backing.
- 10. Do you take your time when going up or down the stairs?**
Go slowly with your hand on the handrail. Rushing is a major cause of falls.
- 11. Do you make sure your vision isn't blocked as you go up or down your stairs?**
If you're carrying something, make sure it doesn't hide the stairs and that one hand is free to use the handrail.
- 12. Do you remove your reading glasses when using stairs?**
Be sure to remove your reading glasses when walking or climbing up or down stairs. If you use bifocals, adjust your glasses so you can see the stairs clearly.

Take 12 steps to be safe!

www.publichealth.gc.ca/seniors

