



Making Your Home Safe for Eldercare

In the same way that you must “baby-proof” your home when a child comes into your life, it is important to take some steps to ensure the safety of the elderly persons who are coming into your home to live. Senior citizens obviously do not want to be controlled or treated as if they were unable to care for themselves. They cherish their freedom and their sense of independence. As with everyone else in this world, they wish to live their lives in a dignified manner. However, assessing your home security with older people in mind does require that you be firm yet flexible.

To secure the safety and well being of the elderly, it is important to check the medicines the person is taking. All medications may have side effects, and some could cause problems for the elderly patient. It is important to:

- ☞ Make sure you know the correct names of the drugs
- ☞ Make sure you know what those drugs are for
- ☞ Know how the medications should be taken
- ☞ Know when the medications should be taken
- ☞ Be aware of side effects and when to consult a doctor

Remove safety hazards and make the home more comfortable - homes can be hazardous for older people, who may be at risk for falls, cuts and burns:

- ☞ Add better lighting
- ☞ Prevent burns by setting water temperature lower on hot water heater
- ☞ Provide support in the shower and tub by mounting bars to hold and bath seats for bathing
- ☞ For toilets a grab bar may also be necessary as well as a raised toilet seat
- ☞ It might be wise to consider a bedside commode for nighttime
- ☞ Use non-slip flooring especially in the bathroom and kitchen
- ☞ Remove throw carpets as they can be a trip hazard
- ☞ Ensure that all carpets, tiles and floorboards are in good repair

☞ Do they need a bed rail or a grab bar next to their bed to aid them getting in and out of bed independently?

☞ There is a wealth of products and information on the market for other assistive devices that can help with all levels of daily life, research these devices and see what you might be in need of in your own home

Where possible, create systems in your home that allows the person to do some things independently:

☞ Put everything that they need to make a tea, coffee, a snack or a light meal at their level

☞ All items required for regular hygiene should also be accessible

☞ Remove any need for using stepladders or chairs to access items, put their treasures at an easy reach level as well

☞ If you are unable to supervise their medication times, buy a pill organizer and go over their medication schedule regularly

☞ For those requiring greater assistance there are personal reminder systems available through medical alert companies

☞ Companies such as Galaxy Medical Alert Systems can also provide you with fall detectors and other personal alarms for additional security

Additional measures may be needed should the senior in your home be exhibiting signs of early dementia or Alzheimer's:

☞ Lock balcony and sliding doors to curb wandering

☞ Use an alarm system on doors and windows if necessary

☞ Register your loved one with community agencies like the Alzheimer's Society's "Safely Home" project that helps identify them and get them returned home faster should they wander (www.safelyhome.ca)

☞ Make sure you have a recent picture and personal details (height & weight) to help you help the police if they wander

☞ Be realistic about the level of care you can provide in your own home once the elder's dementia or Alzheimer's progresses