



SAFETY IN THE HOME

HELPFUL ADVICE

Tips for Preventing Falls

- Ensure floor surfaces are non-slip, securely fixed and in good general repair
- Arrange your furniture so that you can move around easily
- Make sure there are no trailing flexes from electrical appliances
- Clear away any clutter from your hallway and stairs and ensure that your stairs are well lit
- Take extra care with stairs and steps and use the hand rail
- Fit safety rails in the toilet and bathroom
- Leave a low energy light bulb on all night on the landing and keep a torch or lamp by your bed
- Regular physical activity helps to improve your balance and keep your muscles strong. Check with your doctor before you start new exercises
- A diet rich in calcium and vitamin D and regular weight bearing exercise will help keep your bones healthy and reduce the risk of breaks or fractures
- Have your eyes checked every year – eye tests are free if you are aged 60 or over
- Wear shoes with rubber soles and non-slip heels.

If you do have a fall or accident:

- Don't panic – try to stay calm. If you are alone attract attention by banging on the floor or a wall



- Use your personal alarm if you have one or call 999 if you can reach the phone
- Keep warm, pull a coat or blanket over you if possible, keep your arms and legs moving by tensing your muscles
- If you can, try to get up off the floor. Roll over on to your hands and knees first. Use a piece of sturdy furniture to try and pull yourself up. Ideally you should crawl over to a heavy chair or settee and get into a sitting position to rest before trying to stand
- If you do fall, inform your doctor even if you are not hurt – there may be a medical reason for your fall, or your doctor can advise you on how to prevent further falls
- Some medicines can make you feel dizzy and increase your risk of an accident. If you take more than four medicines ask your doctor or pharmacist to review them.

Prepare for emergencies

Place details of your doctor and close relatives or friends in an obvious place, perhaps behind the front door, so that people know who to contact in an emergency.

Tips for Preventing Fires in the Home

- Fit a smoke alarm and check it every week. Use a pole or brush shaft to reach the test button – do not stand on chairs!
- At night time take out plugs; close internal doors; move curtains/clothes/papers away from heaters; empty ashtrays and put a guard on open fires
- Draw up a fire escape plan so that everyone in the house knows what to do if the smoke alarm goes off



- Never leave a chip pan or any cooking unattended
- Never overload electric sockets and always use the correct fuse
- If you smoke use deep ashtrays and never smoke in bed
- Make sure that all smoking materials are put out properly and are disposed of in a metal container, not a waste paper bin
- Always keep matches and lighters safely out of reach of children
- Avoid using plug in air fresheners as they can be a fire hazard
- Never leave candles unattended and keep them away from anything that could catch fire
- Don't leave electric blankets folded. Store them flat or rolled up to protect the internal wiring
- Get your electric blanket serviced regularly and check for damage signs such as frayed fabric, worn flex and scorch marks. Unplug your electric blanket when you go to bed, unless you are absolutely sure it is the type that can be left on overnight
- Have your gas and electrical appliances serviced at regular intervals. Central heating boilers need to be serviced annually and chimneys swept every year.

Tips for Avoiding Scalds

- Consider having Thermostatic Mixing Valves (TMVs) fitted to bath taps. These valves regulate the temperature of the water coming out of the tap to a maximum of 48°C
- To avoid scalds always put cold water in the bath first and check the temperature with your elbow before getting in



- Try not to carry hot liquids further than necessary
- When using the cooker, always use the rear hot plates and turn the panhandles away from the front of the cooker
- Ensure your hot water bottle is of good quality and replace if they show signs of wear. Hot water bottles should be used to pre-heat your bed and removed before you get in.

Tips for Managing your Medication

As well as getting advice from your doctor, pharmacists based in local community pharmacies are trained to give people advice on medicines including issues like: storage, disposal, side effects, and how to best take your medicines. Some tips for managing medicines include:

- Make regular appointments with your doctor to make sure that the medicines that have been prescribed for you are still appropriate
- All medicines have possible side effects. Many people experience no side effects at all. If you do experience symptoms that you think might be side effects from your medicines, speak to your doctor or pharmacist
- You need to be extremely careful when taking medicines such as sleeping pills and painkillers that are physically addictive. Only take painkillers according to the instructions on the packet. Never take a larger number of painkilling tablets or capsules or take them more frequently than is stated on the label. If you are already taking painkillers prescribed for you by your doctor, never



purchase additional painkillers without speaking to a pharmacist first

- Never share your medicines or give them to anyone else
- Avoid taking out of date medicines. Check the box or container for the expiry date
- Take medicines you no longer need or use back to the pharmacy. Never throw them out with the household waste or put them down the sink
- It's useful to keep a list of all the current medication you are taking in a place that health professionals and family members can access in case of an emergency
- Care should be taken if drinking alcohol while taking any medicine but for some medicines it's important not to take any alcohol. Check with your pharmacist
- Keep all medicines in a lockable container or cupboard and out of the reach of children
- When ordering repeat prescriptions you will normally have to collect your script from your GP practice. However, some pharmacies offer a prescription collection service from local surgeries and a home delivery service to people who are unable to leave their home. Ask at your local pharmacy if they offer these services.

MEDICATION SERVICES

You can speak to your pharmacist if you require any information on your medicines or how to take them. All pharmacists will be able to provide you with advice and help, however, a large number of pharmacists can offer you additional help and support through the 'Managing Your Medicine' service. Ask your pharmacist if they offer this



service or look for the poster in the pharmacy showing that they can provide this service.

TELEPHONE SUPPORT SERVICES

Call Response Service and Personal Alarms

A number of organisations provide a 24-hour immediate call response service. At the touch of a button you can be connected to a response team who will summon the help you need. Unlike a phone, you don't need to dial an emergency service number and the system will work from anywhere in your home or garden using a remote button or pendant that can be worn on your wrist or around your neck.

This service can summon help in the case of an emergency or can be used more generally if you:

- Are anxious about unwanted callers
- Have health or mobility problems
- Are worried about the risk of falling
- Need additional support.

Financial assistance may be available to pay for the service through a community care grant from the social fund if you are in receipt of pension credit and have savings of less than £1,000.

For more information contact Age NI or Fold Housing Association.



Age NI Enterprises

Telephone: **0808 100 4545** (Lines are open 9am-5pm

Monday to Friday)

Website: www.ageuk.org.uk

Fold Housing Association

Telephone: **028 9042 1010**

Website: www.foldgroup.co.uk

Good Morning Projects

Good Morning Projects are a free and confidential telephone service in Belfast for older and vulnerable people. A support team phones clients each morning to check on their well being. Two contact names and phone numbers are kept on record in case of emergency. If you live in an area in the table below and would like to register for your local service, please contact the good morning project between 9am – 1pm.

Good Morning Project	Geographical area covered	Contact Details
Good Morning West Belfast	West Belfast	Telephone: 028 9020 0228
Good Morning Ballysillan	North Belfast	Telephone: 028 9071 9200
Good Morning Colin	Colin area and greater Dunmurry	Telephone: 028 9062 7863
Recall Project*	South & East Belfast	Telephone: 028 9046 9946

*This project also offers befriending and advice services.



HOME AND FIRE SAFETY SERVICES

Home Safety Check Scheme

Belfast City Council provides a free Home Safety Check for older people. Advisors can show you the risk areas in your home; check all electrical sockets and replace any burnt, damaged or broken plugs. Advice can be provided on the various specialist services available and referrals made to other agencies, such as Occupational Therapists and the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service.

Telephone Belfast City Council on **028 9091 8715** and ask for the Home Safety Officer

Castlereagh Borough Council also provides a free Home Safety Check for people aged over 60. They will call at your home to provide advice and will supply some small pieces of safety equipment where appropriate. With your permission, they can make referrals as necessary to ensure you get the support you need to keep you safer in your home.

Telephone Castlereagh Borough Council on **028 9049 4670** and ask for the Home Safety Officer

Home Fire Safety Check Scheme

Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS) provide a free home fire safety check scheme. On request fire officers will come to your house and give you advice on fire hazards; how to avoid fires and fit a free battery powered smoke alarm if necessary.



Telephone: NIFRS on **028 9266 4221** to register for a free home fire safety check. For further information please visit www.nifrs.org/fire_safety

Electric Blanket Testing

D M Electrics currently offers an electric blanket testing service to groups wanting to check the safety of electric blankets in their area. Electric blankets can be a fire hazard if they are not kept in good working order so it is useful to have them checked regularly.

Telephone: DM Electrics on **028 4372 6067** or 078 8943 0555 if you would like them to come along to an event organised by your group to test electric blankets. The cost for their service is £315. They can give you guidance on how to organise such an event in your area.

Ligoniel Improvement Association

Ligoniel Improvement Association run information sessions including practical demonstrations on chip pan and electrical fires and safety in the home.

For more information telephone **028 9039 1225**

FALLS PREVENTION SERVICES

Falls Prevention Classes

If you have had a number of falls, are at risk from falling or have a fear of falling, your GP may consider referring you to a Falls Assessment clinic in your area.



For information on safety equipment/adaptations and the Centre for Independent Living go to the Housing section. (page 66)

RoSPA

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents is a registered charity actively involved in the promotion of safety and the prevention of accidents in all areas of life: at work, in the home, and on the roads, in schools, at leisure and on (or near) water.

Telephone: RoSPA in Northern Ireland on **028 9050 1160**

Email: info-ni@rospa.com for general advice on home safety and accident prevention.

Website: www.rospa.co.uk/ni/aboutus.htm