

Caregiver Assistance News

“Caring for You - Caring for Others”

Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.

*Serving Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence,
Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton Counties in Ohio*

www.aaa7.org **Helping You Age Better!**



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Preparing the Home - Safety First

Preparing your home for a senior or a disabled adult is about how to make the home as comfortable and safe as possible. It can be much the same as childproofing your home for a young child who can get hurt. Accidents can happen, but with a little planning they can be prevented. Each room must be evaluated, reorganized if needed, and made as accident proof as possible. Ask a relative, friend or a home care agency to help identify any safety hazards you may have overlooked.

General Safety Tips

Keep the furniture in the same familiar place and make sure it will not move if leaned on. Take out unnecessary furniture and leave space for a walker or wheelchair to get around. Contrasting colors play a big part in seeing well. As much as possible, the color of furniture, toilet seats, counters, etc., should be different from the floor color.

- Use chairs with long armrests to help the person get up and down.
- Add cushioning to sharp corners.
- Use low-pile carpet in solid colors.
- Don't leave anything on the floor that might cause tripping, especially on stairs.
- Install strong railings.
- Ensure good lighting—inside and out.
- Place night-lights in the rooms used by the person in your care.
- Have an emergency fire escape plan; keep fire escape routes clear; keep a fire extinguisher in the kitchen; and put up smoke alarms.



The Kitchen

The kitchen can be filled with booby traps for the unwary. Dangers include cuts from sharp knives, burns and scalds, and injuries from reaching and bending. Keep those who enjoy helping in the kitchen safe by following these tips:

Kitchen Safety Tips

- Use an electric tea kettle.
- Install microwave ovens at countertop height, not over-head, to reduce the chance of spills.

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- Set the water-heater temperature below 120°F.
- Use a single-lever faucet that can balance water temperature.
- Provide an area away from the knife drawer and the stove where the person in your care can help prepare food.
- Use a microwave oven whenever possible (but not if a person with a pacemaker is present).
- Ask the gas company to modify your stove to provide a gas odor that is strong enough to alert you if the pilot light goes out.
- If possible, have the range controls on the front of the stove.
- Provide a step stool, never a chair, to reach high shelves.

Kitchen Safety, Comfort and Convenience

- Use adjustable-height chairs with locking casters.
- Install a Lazy Susan® (swivel plate) in corner cabinets.
- Set up cabinets to reduce bending and reaching.
- Put in a storage wall, rather than upper cabinets.
- For easy access, replace drawer knobs with handles.
- Place a wire rack on the counter to reduce back strain from reaching for dishes.
- Adapt one counter for wheelchair access.
- Remove doors under the sink to allow for wheelchair access; cover exposed pipes.
- Create different counter heights by installing folding or pull-out surfaces.
- If bending is difficult, consider a wall oven.
- Install pullout shelves in cabinets.
- If possible, use a fridge that has the freezer on the bottom.
- Prop the front of the fridge so that the door closes by itself. (If needed, reverse the way the door swings).



A cutting board placed over a drawer provides an easy-to-reach surface for a person in a wheelchair.

Note - Bedroom Safety

Use a monitor to listen to activity in the room, and—

- Keep a cell phone, flashlight and whistle near the person's bed.
- Provide a sturdy chair or table next to the bed for help getting in and out of bed.

Memory Care – Avoid Falls

Falls are the leading cause of injury-related deaths among people 65 and older. Protect the person in your care by:

- Exercising to preserve muscle strength and flexibility.
- Being extra careful when the person takes medications that cause dizziness or sleepiness.
- Going to the eye doctor once a year for check-ups.



Taking Care of Yourself

Happy Feet Prevent Falls

Every year, one in three Americans will take a tumble, and risk increases with age.

Healthy feet prevent falls. As we age, the foot's muscle tissue thins, blood circulation decreases, nerves become less sensitive, and the cushioning tissues on the soles become less springy.

Arches start to fall and the foot flattens and spreads. Older toes tend to curl because of weak muscles. Corns, bunions and tender spots are frequent. Because diabetes damages the foot's nerves, diabetics are at particular risk of foot problems.

Sore feet are a major reason for unsteady gait and poor balance, and most older adults who fell reported that they had chronically aching feet.

Footwear is the single most important factor in foot health. Getting the right size is vital. A good orthopedic shoe specialist and the trained staff at sporting goods stores can help in getting good shoes for older feet.



Source: Harvard Health Letter

Interested in a Telephone Support Group for Caregivers?

The Caregiver Support Program at the Area Agency on Aging District 7 is offering a free telephone support group for caregivers.

Upcoming Call: January 21st from 1:30 pm - 2:30 pm

If you are interested, please call Vicki Woyan for more details.

[1-800-582-7277](tel:1-800-582-7277), extension 215 or you can e-mail info@aaa7.org.



HEAP Home Energy Assistance Program

Now open for applications for 2020-2021.
This program can help eligible Ohioans manage their heating bills. Applications are available from your local Community Action Agency

If interested or if you have questions, contact your county Community Action Agency or the AAA7 Resource Center at 1-800-582-7277.

Join us for Wellness Wednesdays

LIVE every Wednesday at 10:00 am on the AAA7 Facebook Page or watch a recorded version on our website or Facebook page.





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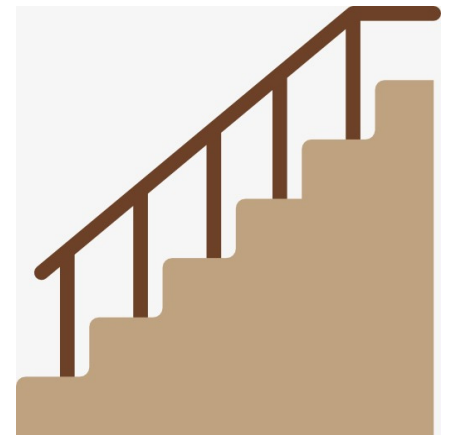
Your local Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc. serves the following counties in Ohio: Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton. Services are rendered on a non-discriminatory basis. Those interested in learning more about the services provided through the Area Agency on Aging District 7 can call toll-free at 1-800-582-7277. Here, individuals can talk directly with a trained Resource Specialist who will assist them with information surrounding the programs and services that are available to best serve their needs. The Agency can also be reached via e-mail at info@aaa7.org.

Safety Tips - Outdoor Areas for Dementia Safety

Safe outdoor areas are important, especially for those who are confused and are mobile.

Safety features should include:

- Ramps for access on ground that is not level or even.
- A deck with a sturdy railing.
- Outside doors locked or alarmed.
- A key hidden outside.
- Enough light to see walkway hazards at night.
- Non-slip step surfaces in good repair.
- Stair handrails fastened to their fittings.
- Step edges marked with reflective paint.
- A hedge or fence around the yard and dangerous areas like pools or streams.



In addition, unplug or remove power tools.

*Some content in this publication is excerpted from *The Comfort of Home: Caregivers Series*. It is for informational use and not health advice. It is not meant to replace medical care but to supplement it. The publisher assumes no liability with respect to the accuracy, completeness or application of information presented or the reader's misunderstanding of the text.*