Time for "Spring Cleaning!"

Spring has sprung! And what a welcome change to feel the warmer weather, see the sun shining, hear the birds chirping, and smell the wonderful flowers in bloom...and usually, with the warmer weather, comes the "spring cleaning" routine.

It's always important to not only take care of the cleaning side of this yearly chore, but especially for seniors, it's important to take this time to check other items that are also very important. The "spring cleaning" topic is very timely and a great opportunity to take stock of the overall safety of your loved one's home. Below are some important items you should check at least bi-annually to help your older or disabled loved one maintain their independence and safety:

• Take stock of the medicine cabinet. Check all items for expiration dates. Are the medications stored in their own containers? Are they stored in a cool, dry place? Properly discard any unused medications. The FDA has more information regarding medication disposal online at https://www.fda.gov/media/74164/download

• Replace the batteries in all smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors. Run a test to ensure they're working.

• Check to make sure the home has a fire extinguisher that has been inspected within the past year. Offer a brief instruction on using the device. Even if you think your loved one might not remember, it's wise to keep a fire extinguisher in an obvious location easily accessible to friends, relatives or neighbors.

• Clean up clutter. Clutter increases the risk for falls, fire and other problems such as insects or rodents. Remove unnecessary furniture that obstructs the traffic flow, organize cabinets so that the most frequently used items are easily accessible, and throw away any old items from the pantry or refrigerator.

• Create an emergency plan. Set the speed dial on the phone for emergency contacts. Appoint a neighbor as an emergency backup. If your loved one lives in a senior apartment complex, find a friendly neighbor and implement the buddy system; they should each keep an eye out for problems and have contact information for one another's emergency contacts.

The Area Agency on Aging District 7 serves 10 counties in southern Ohio, providing home and community-based long-term care options for seniors and adults with disabilities. If you have questions about long-term care options or would like to learn more about the long-term care resources in your area for you or someone you know, simply give us a call. A trained staff member is ready to assist you on the phone Monday through Friday from 8:00 am until 4:30 pm by calling us toll-free at 1-800-582-7277. We can answer any questions you may have and also provide an in-home consultation at no cost to discuss your available options in more detail.

More than one-third of adults 65 and older fall each year in the U.S. Test your knowledge on how to make the home safer by answering True or False to the questions below.

1. *To reduce the risk of falls, put salt or kitty litter on icy sidewalks.* T F

2. *A fall to the side generally causes fewer problems than falling backward on the buttocks.* T F

3. *Falls are the most common cause of nursing home placement.* T F

4. *Certain medications increase the risk of falling.* T F

5. *Many people who fall, even those who are not injured, develop a fear of falling.* T F

6. *If the person in your care has osteoporosis, they are more likely to break a bone if they fall.* T F

7. *Standing on your toes for 10 seconds and then rocking back on your heels for 10 seconds can improve your balance.* T F

8. *Guard rails on the bed may add to the risk of falls if the person with Alzheimer's attempts to climb over them.* T F

9. *Age-related vision problems, such as cataracts and glaucoma, increase the risk of falling.* T F

10. *Assistance dogs are only for blind people.* T F

<u>KEY:</u> 1. T 2. F 3. T 4. T 5. T 6. T 7. T 8. T 9. T 10. F