

How to prevent slips and falls in the bathroom

Bathrooms can serve as sanctuaries, providing a warm tub to soak in after a long, weary day or a private place to retire for a few minutes of peace and quiet. Bathrooms also can be dangerous places, as various groups warn that most slip and fall accidents that occur at home will happen in the bathroom.

The combination of hard surfaces and moisture from sinks and showers can create dangerous conditions. Furthermore, bathrooms tend to be small spaces, so should a fall occur, it's more likely a person will hit various surfaces on the way down.

The risk of falling in a bathroom increases with age. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, seniors over age 65 have a 25 percent chance of falling in the bathroom. Seniors generally have less flexibility and balance than younger people, meaning falls can be life-threatening. Bones easily can become fractured and internal bleeding may occur in serious cases. Bathrooms can be made more safe in a few simple ways.

- Keep the bathtub clean. Soap residue or other grime can contribute to slippery conditions

in the shower and tub. Cleaning these surfaces frequently can improve traction.

- Declutter the space. Remove extraneous items from the bathroom that can pose as tripping hazards.

- Choose the right bath mat. Bath mats can contribute to slips and falls. For those who cannot live without them, choose a mat with slip-resistant backings and add double-faced tape for added security.

- Limit moisture. Use a weighted shower curtain or install shower doors to prevent water from getting on the floor. Mop up any water or additional condensation to help dry the bathroom. Install an exhaust fan to help vent moisture that can condense and accumulate on the floor and fixtures.

- Improve bathroom lighting. Make sure lighting in the bathroom illuminates all areas.

- Wear non-slip shoes. Wearing non-slip shoes when in the bathroom can reduce the chances of slipping on wet floors.

- Install a walk-in shower or bathtub. These lipless fixtures can assist those who have difficulty entering a standard tub or shower. Grab bars also can help with maneuvering in and



out of the shower area.

- Use a raised toilet seat. A raised toilet, or one with a special seat that reduces the distance one has to go to reach a seated position, may help prevent falls.

Any individual with a health condition that causes vision disturbances or difficulties with balance should work with a doctor to find a resolution. These conditions may contribute to falls.

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