

AARP Bulletin

Real Possibilities

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WANTED:
More Docs
For Aging
Americans
PAGE 8

Expert
Tips to
Avoid
Danger



GREAT WAYS...

...To Make Your **HOME**
Safe and Healthy

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Cover Story



Home may be where the heart is, **but it can also be dangerous.** Around 18,000 Americans die every year from accidental injuries in their homes. Almost 38,000 older adults annually are treated in emergency rooms just for tripping over carpets and rugs. To keep you secure in your surroundings, we reached out to the nation's leading health and safety experts. These simple tips can protect you and your loved ones and **may even save your life.**

5 Hidden Hazards

Lead The situation in Flint, Mich., is extreme, but lead in water isn't rare: Up to 20 percent of exposure comes from drinking water tainted by contaminated pipes. Ask your water authority to test your pipes—and repair them if necessary. Something you can do: Install a faucet filter. Also, older homes may contain lead paint

and dust. A DIY test can detect lead, but you'll need a pro to remove it.

Carbon monoxide This invisible gas is a killer. Make sure you have a CO alarm on each floor.

Radon This colorless, odorless gas is the second leading cause of

lung cancer. Test every three years, especially if you've made energy-efficient improvements. A tightly sealed home increases your risk.

Mold Mold is bad for the respiratory and immune systems. Get a DIY kit or hire a professional to detect it. Test every three to five years.

Dust mites These microscopic critters, which are found in carpeting and bedding, can aggravate asthma and allergies. Get hypoallergenic bedding and wash it frequently in hot water. You also can place a pillow in a plastic bag and put it in the freezer for 24 hours to kill mites.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/ANDREA MICHAEL/GETTY IMAGES

Photographs by NICK FERRARI

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Cover Story

11 Moves to Make Your Home Safe for Grandkids




Keep meds out of reach. About 38 percent of child-poisoning cases involve grandparents' medications, so clear all drugs from countertops, tables and drawers. Put a child-proof lock on the medicine cabinet. Don't forget to watch your purse.

Banish detergent pods. These colorful packets of liquid laundry or dishwasher soap look like candy. But they pose "a serious poisoning risk to young children," says a study in the journal *Pediatrics*.

Nix crib clutter. We used to put our babies to sleep in a crib with bumpers and stuffed toys, but clutter can be a suffocation hazard. The American Academy of Pediatrics now says the safest way for a

baby to sleep is ABC—alone on her back in the crib.

Make furniture tip-proof. Flat-screen TVs and modern furniture are particularly prone to tipping if little ones try to pull themselves up.



5 OVERLOOKED CHOKING HAZARDS

- [Mini batteries](#)
- [Jewelry](#)
- [Refrigerator magnets](#)
- [Pen caps](#)
- [Loose change](#)

Attach anti-tip brackets or straps to safely secure these items. And don't forget outlet covers, drawer locks, stairway gates, and edge and corner guards for furniture.

Watch walkers and wheelchairs. For kids, they are accidents waiting to happen! If you use one, make sure to keep a watchful eye and let your grandchild know that it's not a toy.

Keep guns under lock and key. If you're among the 1 in 3 Americans with a gun, always keep it unloaded in a locked cabinet, with the ammunition stored separately.

Beware of old baby gear. The used toys and baby equipment you saved may no longer be safe. Visit cpsc.gov to see if the item meets current safety rules.

Be present with your pet. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than 77,000 children under age 10 are treated each year in emergency rooms for dog bites.

Guard pools and drains. If you've got a backyard pool or hot tub, you likely know to prevent access with a childproof gate. But you may not be aware of the danger of drains: Suction forces can be powerful enough to trap small children underwater.

Watch all water. Since toddlers' heads are heavy in proportion to bodies, they can easily be pulled down. That's why even an inch of standing water is dangerous. Put a childproof lock on the toilet and drain bathwater immediately.

Remember stove safety. When kids are around, use back burners and always keep handles of pots and pans turned in.

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Cover Story

8 Ways to Make Your Place Secure For Your Elderly Parents



Clear the path. Remove throw rugs and repair loose carpeting or raised areas of flooring. Move low furniture to avoid potential tripping hazards and clear electric cords and any clutter that could cause a fall.

Install anti-scalding devices. They automatically turn off water that gets too hot and can be installed easily in showers and tubs. Plus, they are inexpensive (about \$40). You can also turn down the thermostat on your water heater so it never gets above 120 degrees.

Light the way. Use night-lights in hallways, stairwells and bathrooms, and put bright light bulbs in closets.

Minimize bathroom hazards. Install grab handles and nonskid mats inside and outside the shower or tub. Taller toilets and shower seats are also recommended for people with mobility issues.

Steady their steps. Add sturdy handrails to stairways (even a second handrail on the opposite wall) and put treads on steps. Be sure to use only nonslip floor wax.

Cooking care. If an elderly parent is using the kitchen, place pots and pans at waist level for easy access. Devices like timers and motion sensors can automatically turn off ovens and stove tops if left unattended.

Consider a granny cam. Need to keep track of an older adult while working or running errands? Surveillance cameras now come with motion detectors and let you check a live feed from your smartphone. Just be sure to get permission from your loved one.

Get a handle. Arthritic hands can have a hard time turning a round doorknob. Consider lever-style handles and use door locks that can be opened from both sides.

8 Fundamentals Of Fire Safety

Don't get alarm lazy. Make sure you've got ionization and photoelectric alarms on every floor, including the basement. When the alarm chirps, replace the battery.

Do get a multisensory device. If you are deaf or hard of hearing, you may need an alarm that flashes or vibrates to alert you that something is amiss.

Banish old space heaters. They can lower your utility bills, but they're also a prime cause of home fires. Buy a new model that turns off automatically if it tips over or gets overheated.

Toss after 10. Problems with electric blankets and heating pads tend to occur when they're more than 10 years old. Replace if they have



3 SURPRISING THINGS MOST LIKELY TO GO UP IN FLAMES

Battery-charged appliances

Paper and cloth towels

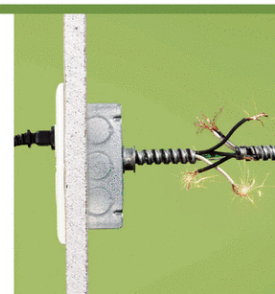
Dryer lint

charred spots, they have frayed or cracked electrical cords, or they're a decade or more old.

Beware of overload. Older homes may not be equipped to handle today's stash of electronics. Overburdened systems can spark fires. Replace, don't repair, damaged electrical cords.

Tend to the furnace. Faulty fireplaces and woodstoves are prime hazards. Have a trained professional inspect your system, especially if it's been a while. Generators should also be checked, ideally every year.

Practice makes protection. Have an escape plan and practice it. Any plan should have two ways



out of every room; make sure windows and doors open easily. Remember: Stay low and go.

Smoking no's. Smoking-related fires cause the most fire deaths in the U.S. It's best not to smoke inside your house, but fires can start outside too. Dampen butts and ashes before throwing them away.

12 Smart Strategies to Keep Your Kitchen Safe

Mind your pots and pans. The Consumer Product Safety Commission says in 2014 more than 32,000 people were hurt using pots and pans, from burns to shattering glass pans. Mitts are mandatory. And remember—don't take glass dishes directly from the freezer to the oven, and never add liquid when a glass pan is piping hot.

Leave it unwashed. Contrary to what you may have heard, there's no need to rinse meat, poultry or fish before cooking. Doing so can spread bacteria to your sink, countertops and other kitchen surfaces.

Forgo the cooling-off period. Illness-causing bacteria can grow in perishable foods within two hours. So put leftovers in the refrigerator as soon as possible, even if they're still warm.

Don't stick to Teflon. Sure it makes cooking and cleanup easier, but pans coated with Teflon that were made before 2012 contain perfluorooctanoic acid, and studies in lab animals have found exposure to these chemicals increases the risk of certain cancers. Stainless steel and cast iron are better choices for cookware.

Beware the bagel. Nearly 3,000 people in 2014 cut their hand or fingers while trying to slice a bagel. Either buy them presliced or, better yet, buy a bagel slicer.

Marinate in the fridge. Harmful germs in marinade or food can multiply quickly at room temperature.

Nuke with care. Microwaves cause more emergency room scald injuries than any other kitchen device. Let food cool a few minutes before removing, and be careful touching a hot container or removing a cover. Allow scalding steam to escape.



Put a lid on it. If you're frying, keep a lid nearby to smother a small grease fire.

Be dishwasher wise. Place utensils with the sharp end down. Let the machine cool before emptying to prevent burns.

Keep knives sharp. Dull knives are more dangerous than sharp ones because it takes more force to slice through the food. That makes it more likely to lose control if the worn edge slips.

Chill out. You might be tempted to save energy costs by setting the refrigerator and freezer at slightly higher temperatures, but you'll be beckoning bacteria. Keep the fridge 40 degrees, the freezer at 0 degrees.

Rinse all produce. Even if they are prewashed, you should still give your fruits and vegetables a cleaning. Use a brush to remove visible dirt and then rinse them under running water from the faucet. Studies show that this is more effective than using a commercial produce wash.




3 GERM MAGNETS
Sponges
Zap moist sponge for 2 minutes in the microwave to clean.

Faucet screens
Soak in bleach solution to sanitize.

Stove knobs
Remove, if possible, and wash in hot soapy water.


6 Tactics To Get Rid Of Bugs

 **Mosquitoes** The CDC says oil of lemon eucalyptus is an effective, natural mosquito repellent. Products containing the oil are widely available online and at discount retailers like Target and Walmart.

Dog ticks Prevention is key. Put one drop of rose geranium oil between your dog's shoulder blades and one at the top of the base of the tail, or two drops directly on the collar.

 **Pantry moths** Wipe food containers and shelves with white vinegar and then place bay leaves inside the canisters and cupboards.

Ants Vinegar deters ants from entering your home by overpowering the scent they would use to follow other ants' footsteps. Mix a 50/50 solution of vinegar and water in a spray bottle and squirt in places that are likely to attract ants, such as the area around pet food bowls and other food sources.

 **Bees** Listen to the experts: Do not attempt to remove a bee swarm yourself, says the American Beekeeping Federation. Do an Internet search for your local area or state's beekeeping association to find a beekeeper who can remove the bees without killing them.

Camel crickets These giant jumping crickets—which don't bite, by the way—may make a home in your basement. Use glue traps to dispatch them.



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Cover Story

7 Dangerous Products

Step stools Losing your balance and slipping off one of these can cause back injuries, knee injuries and bone fractures, so make sure yours is stable. Look for a stool with sturdy legs, fitted rubber tips and a base that's wider than the top. When using, hold on to something stationary.

Bed rails Designed to enhance safety, they can injure children or older people if improperly installed or badly designed.

Humidifiers Keep your humidifiers clean. If they're not properly maintained, you can get sick from the buildup of mold and bacteria.

Dryers These appliances start about 6,000 home fires every year. The culprits may be defective dryers or excess lint that was never cleaned out. Check the lint traps after every load.

Blenders From lacerating blades to the risk of scalding when hot liquid is splashed, beware the blender. The government logged 9,000 blender injuries in 2014.

Lawn mowers They cause some 80,000 injuries each year. Wear sturdy shoes and eye protection, and check your yard for stones and other debris that can be thrown by your mower.

Toasters These everyday devices cause thousands of fires—including several fatal ones—each year, according to federal watchdogs. Clean out the crumbs and unplug when not in use. Ditto for toaster ovens.



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8 Steps to A Safer Backyard

Be an inspector. Take a close look at balconies, porches, railings and outdoor furniture to see if there are any missing or rusted nails or fasteners. Also check for splinters, buckled or loose boards, and uneven stair treads and discolored areas. Make sure there are no cracks or gaps in your pathways that could trigger a fall.

Say so long to slick surfaces. Keep your driveways, walkways and garden paths clear of leaves, branches and other debris. After a heavy rainfall, be attentive to puddles and slick surfaces, and wear shoes or boots with good treads.

Give your lawn a once-over. One misstep on uneven surfaces and you can lose your balance. Ask a friend or family member to walk around your yard with you to check for hazards such as roots, fallen branches, rocks or bumpy ground. They may see something that you missed.

Don't try to be Mr. or Ms. Fix-it. If your mower or weed whacker breaks, take it to a professional repair shop. Throw away broken garden tools.

Keep it handy. If you have to root around the shed or garden, or reach up on high shelves, accidents are more likely to happen. So place within easy reach the yard equipment that you use most frequently.

Follow this step. We are at the highest risk of ladder injuries during fall months when we clean gutters, hang outdoor lights or do yard maintenance, according to a study by the Oregon Health & Science University Trauma Program. Climb a ladder only when someone strong can be there to spot you. If you're at all wary about climbing, don't do it.

Get slip-resistant. Add abrasive strips or rubber stair treads and use deck paint that has a rough texture.

Install outdoor lights. Put in the ones that are motion-sensitive. Don't neglect the porch, pathway, driveway and backyard.

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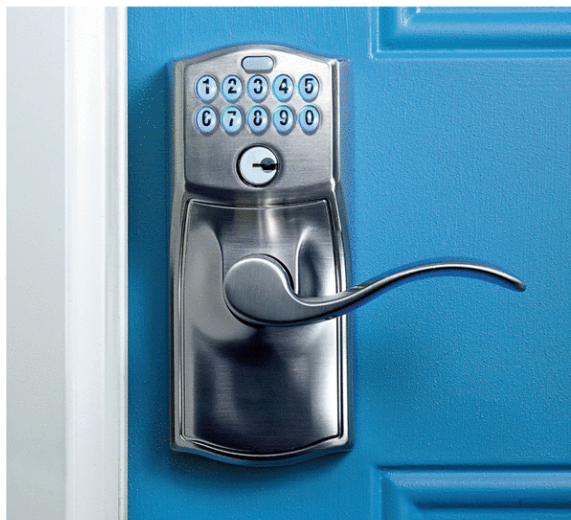
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Cover Story

10 Tricks to Scare Away Burglars



Check the latest tech. There are all sorts of new home security devices, like doorbells that ring on your cellphone (like the Ring Video Doorbell) and inexpensive, easy-to-install surveillance systems, such as the Canary. Get advice at your electronics store or read reviews online.

You can't hide. Crooks know all the "secret" places, so forget about hiding your keys around the house. Instead, ask a trusted neighbor or

friend who lives nearby to keep a spare set. Or better yet, consider a keyless entryway.

Forget Facebook. Resist posting pictures of your vacation on social media while you're away. Friends may not be the only ones reading.

Don't advertise big buys. An empty computer or television carton left on the curb is a flag to crooks. So drive those big boxes to a recycling plant or cut them up.

Ask for a reference. Before hiring anyone, get personal recommendations. Even so, don't leave a worker alone in your home, even for a few minutes.

Keep your mail out of reach. Identity thieves can find a treasure trove in your mailbox, so consider a locking model. And if you haven't gone paperless, remember to shred important documents before putting them in the trash.

Stay well-trimmed. Overgrown shrubbery provides cover for thieves, so make sure that your house is clearly visible from the street. Keep the front of your house well-lit. Guard access to your backyard.

Get a virtual pet. Burglars think twice when they hear a barking dog. If you don't have a pet, get a CD of a growling hound. Or put a dog bowl by your door.

Call the police. Some departments have crime-prevention officers who will survey homes and offer security recommendations.

Know your neighbors. It's the oldest safety system around, but still works like a charm. Ask your neighbors to keep an eye on your home, and do the same for them.

6 Ways to Prepare for A Disaster

Fill a fireproof box. Items should include identification and other important cards, financial records, family photos and emergency cash in small bills.

Design a disaster plan. It should include whom to contact and where to meet family members in case of an emergency. All family members should know the plan and the numbers to call.

Make a list. Include emergency phone numbers such as 911, the local fire department, poison control, and rescue and ambulance services. Keep it in a place where you can find it fast—like on the refrigerator door.

Create a go-kit. Pack a sturdy, easy-to-carry container, such as a backpack or a suitcase on wheels, and keep it in an accessible place. To find a list of what it should include, go to ready.gov/kit.

Turn off. Know how to shut off valves for gas, oil, water and your home's main electrical supply. Put tags on these valves so you can find them quickly, but have a professional turn them back on again, the Federal Emergency Management Agency warns.

Have food and water handy. Store three days' worth of nonperishable food for each family member, plus a gallon of water daily per person. Canned food, peanut butter and energy bars are all good. Important: Don't forget a can opener. □

7 Spring Chores to Take Care Of

[✓] Dryer Clean the exhaust duct and space under the dryer, and get rid of all dust and lint.

[✓] Gutters Clean your gutters, drains and downspouts, so that heavy spring rains can flow freely off your roof.

[✓] Furnace Replace the air filter regularly. A dirty one can restrict

airflow and in turn overwork the furnace, increasing the risk of a carbon monoxide leak.

[✓] Trees Prune dead branches so they don't snap off during fierce seasonal winds.

[✓] Fireplace Examine the exterior of the chimney for any signs of damage. Have the flue cleaned

and inspected by a certified chimney sweep.

[✓] Sump pump If you have one in your basement, test it to be sure it's clean and operable and that the outflow is draining properly.

[✓] Battery check Make sure all your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors have new batteries.