# Stairs and Trip Safety

A friendly, practical guide to preventing falls at home, from sturdy handrails and good lighting to loose rugs, clutter, outdoor steps and icy walkways.

**OUR PROMISE TO YOU**

We wrote this guide for everyone in the home, tenants, owners, roommates and visitors alike, because falls are one of the most common ways people get hurt at home, and most of them are preventable. Good lighting, solid railings and clear paths keep everyone on their feet. If anything here is unclear, we would genuinely love to help.

This guide shares general information to help you, and is not legal, medical or building-code advice. Please use qualified professionals for repairs. Bunklow does not inspect or repair homes.

Over the years, we have seen how many falls start with something small: a loose handrail, a burned-out bulb at the top of the stairs, a rug corner that curled up, a shoe left on a step. We have also seen how quickly a fall can change someone's life, especially for older adults and young children.

The good news is that fall prevention is mostly simple habits. This guide walks through handrails and railings, lighting, keeping stairs and paths clear, rugs and flooring, bathrooms, outdoor steps and walkways, and ice and weather. We hope it helps everyone in your home stay safe and steady.

## FOUR SIMPLE RULES

**1 Hold the handrail**
Sturdy handrails on stairs, used every time, prevent many falls.

**2 Light the way**
Bright lights at the top and bottom of stairs, and night lights in hallways, help everyone see.

**3 Keep paths clear**
Shoes, bags, cords and clutter on stairs and walkways are trip hazards.

**4 Fix problems fast**
Report loose rails, broken steps, torn carpet and uneven walkways right away.

## STAYING STEADY AT HOME

### HABITS THAT PREVENT FALLS

- Use the handrail every time, and carry loads you can see over.
- Keep stairs, hallways and walkways clear of shoes, bags, toys and cords.
- Use night lights in hallways, bathrooms and near stairs.
- Secure rugs with non-slip pads, or remove rugs that slide or curl.
- Wipe up spills right away, especially on hard floors.
- Wear shoes with good grip, especially on stairs and outdoor steps.
- Share loose rails, burned-out stair lights or damaged steps in writing.

**BATHROOMS**

**Non-slip mats in tubs and showers, and grab bars where allowed, help prevent falls in one of the slipperiest rooms.**

### PLEASE BE CAREFUL WITH THESE

- Please don't leave anything on the stairs, even for a minute.
- Please don't run cords across walkways or under rugs.
- Please don't stand on chairs or boxes to reach high places. Use a sturdy step stool.
- Please don't remove or loosen handrails or railings.

**BUNKLY'S FIELD TIP**

**Put a basket at the bottom of the stairs for things that need to go up. Nothing gets left on the steps, and one trip carries it all.**

## IF SOMEONE FALLS

1. Stay calm. If someone is badly hurt, can't get up or hit their head, call 911.
2. Don't rush to lift someone who may be injured. Make them comfortable and wait for help.
3. If they are not hurt, help them get up slowly, resting first.
4. Once everyone is safe, take photos of what caused the fall.
5. Share it with the owner or manager in writing.
6. Encourage the person to see a doctor, even if they feel fine. You did exactly the right thing.

**BUNKLY'S FIELD TIP**

**Mark the edge of a dark basement step with bright tape. Seeing where the step ends prevents a lot of missteps.**

## FOR OWNERS

### BEFORE THE RESIDENT MOVES IN

- Check that every staircase has sturdy handrails, and that railings on decks and balconies are secure.
- Make sure stair lights work and switches are at both the top and bottom where possible.
- Repair loose treads, worn carpet, cracked steps and uneven walkways.
- Add non-slip strips to outdoor steps where needed.
- Plan snow and ice care for outdoor steps and walkways.

**PETS UNDERFOOT**

**Pets love to lie on stairs and in hallways. A quick look before each step helps avoid a surprise.**

## WHEN A TRIP HAZARD IS SHARED

- Thank the resident, and treat loose railings and broken steps as urgent.
- Block off unsafe stairs or paths until they are repaired.
- Have a qualified professional repair railings, steps and walkways.
- Consider extra lighting, grab bars or handrails if a resident asks.
- Write down what was reported, what was done and when, and follow up kindly to make sure all is well.

### A QUICK STAIR AND PATH CHECK

**Handrails solid on every staircase, steps even and secure, carpet tight, lights working at the top and bottom.**

**Paths clear, rugs secured, outdoor steps not slippery, and walkways free of cracks and lifted edges.**

### BUNKLY'S FIELD TIP

**Give every handrail a firm shake at turnover. If it moves at all, tighten or replace it before the next resident moves in.**

## COMMON MYTHS, GENTLY CORRECTED

***"Falls only happen to older adults."***
People of every age trip and fall at home, though older adults face greater risk.

***"A little looseness in a handrail is fine."***
A handrail that moves can fail when someone needs it most.

***"Rugs are safe if they're heavy."***
Even heavy rugs can slide or curl. Non-slip pads help a lot.

***"I know my stairs by heart."***
Fatigue, darkness and carrying things change everything. Light and handrails help.

### CARRYING LAUNDRY

**Use a laundry basket with handles, or make two trips, so one hand is always free for the rail.**

**Hold the handrail every time.**

## SAFETY, HEALTH AND THE LAW

Falls can cause serious injuries, especially for older adults and young children. Regular exercise for strength and balance, good vision checks and reviewing medicines with a doctor can all lower fall risk. If someone falls and is hurt, please call 911 or reach out to a doctor.

Building codes and local rules about handrails, railings, stair lighting, snow removal and who repairs them differ from place to place, and the lease usually spells out who handles what. We would gently encourage a quick look at the rules where your home is, and if you are ever unsure, a local landlord or tenant association or an attorney in your area will be glad to help.

### CHECK STAIRS AND PATHS AT MOVE-IN

**Your move-in walk is the perfect time to shake every handrail, test stair lights, and look for loose steps, torn carpet or uneven walkways. Please give every single item a comment, in any condition, with photos. Bunklow Walk and our free move-in condition report were made for exactly this.**

## A FEW MORE HELPFUL HABITS

### OUTDOOR LIGHTING

**Lights at entrances and along walkways help everyone see steps and edges after dark.**

### WET LEAVES

**Wet leaves on steps and walkways can be as slippery as ice. Sweep them away in the fall.**

### FOOTWEAR AT HOME

**Socks on hard floors and stairs can be slippery. Slippers with grip soles are safer.**

## HELPFUL RESOURCES

- CDC: Older Adult Fall Prevention
- National Safety Council: Slips, Trips and Falls

**We hope this guide helps everyone in your home stay safe and steady. Thank you so much for taking the time to read it. If there is anything we can do to help, we would truly love to hear from you.**

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