Environmental Assessment

Interventions to improve home safety are an important factor for preventing falls in older people living in the community. Home safety assessment and modification interventions have been shown to be effective in reducing rates of falls and risk of falling in individuals at high risk for falls. [[1]](#endnote-1) The evidence indicates that home safety interventions appear to be more effective when performed by an occupational therapist. The following list includes resources for environmental assessment tools. The list is separated into two categories: the first are resources intended for use by healthcare providers and the second by non-professional caregivers (family/friends). In addition, the guide outlines the purpose, objective and structure of each of the resources highlighted.

# PROVIDER

## AGRILife EXTENSION-Improving Independence in the Home Environment: Assessment and Intervention

**Purpose:** To assess the home environment and an individual’s ability to function in its current state. Provides potential interventions for each identified problem.

**Objectives:** To determine a list of potential interventions to improve an individual’s functional status in the home environment.

**Structure:** Five page home environmental checklist with yes/no answers for a variety of problems.

**Process:** Provider assesses individual’s ability to function in the bathroom, bedroom, kitchen, and living room. In addition, the tool evaluates functional status in the areas of medication management, use of the telephone, negotiating steps, home management, safety and leisure.

**Outcomes:** Provides a list of potential interventions for each problem addressed in order to improve functional level and safety in the home

**Reference:** [Falls Prevention for Older Adults](http://fcs.tamu.edu/families/aging/fall_prevention/home_assessment_tools.php)

## Cougar Home Safety Assessment

**Purpose:** To assess the home environment and address safety concerns

**Objectives:** To determine the safety of the home environment

**Structure:** Tool is 8 pages in length. Seventy-eight criteria are evaluated during a home visit, resulting in a safety score.

**Process:** Provider uses checklist to evaluate areas of the home environment

**Outcomes:** Completed checklist can be used to document level of safety for areas of the home along with comments.

**Reference:** [Cougar Home Safety Assessment](https://www.misericordia.edu/images/ot/finalcougar07.pdf)

## Cornell University-GEM Environmental Assessment

**Purpose:** To provide a comprehensive home assessment tool of both problems and possible solutions for each room of the home and outdoor area.

**Objectives:** To provide a checklist for patient’s to complete and share responses with their therapist/health care providers to generate further action.

**Structure:** Fifteen page checklist with yes/no answers to questions. Some questions have a “T” next to specific activities, a “no” response to these questions can be indicative of functional or physical deterioration.

**Process:** Assessment completed of the home environment by a healthcare provider

**Outcomes:** List of potential problems in the home environment and indication of functional or physical deterioration. Suggestions are provided to improve safety in each area assessed.

**Reference:**  [Cornell University-GEM Environmental Assessment](http://www.environmentalgeriatrics.com/pdf/enviro_assessment.pdf)

## Home Safety Self-Assessment Tool (HSSAT)- Dept. of Rehabilitation Science University of Buffalo

**Purpose:** To assess the home environment both indoors and outdoors and provided ADA guidelines on home modifications to prevent falls.

**Objectives:** To identify problems and solutions to the home environment to prevent falls. The form also provides a list of home modification service providers in Erie county New York.

**Structure:** Tool is lengthy at 51 pages. Can serve as a good reference with many pictures and diagrams depicting unsafe conditions and recommendations. Tool provides graphics of ADA recommendations of environmental modifications.

**Process:** Provider assesses home for existing risks using the checklist in the tool and totals the number of problems.

**Outcomes:** List of solutions identified by area of home with existing hazard.

**Reference:** [Home Safety Self-Assessment Tool](http://agingresearch.buffalo.edu/hssat/hssat_v3.pdf)

## Taking Action to Prevent Falls: A Home Environment Assessment

**Purpose:** Form is an environmental assessment of interior of home environment. It is useful as a screening tool to warrant PT/OT referrals. This checklist is designed primarily for the professional to identify fall hazards for an individual. Demographic data is included such as h/o previous falls, balance difficulty, and difficulty with functional activities.

**Objective:** To provide identification of fall hazards by a professional in the home environment.

**Process/Structure:** Four page checklist is completed by professional of areas in the home. Questions are YES/NO/Not Applicable, assessor defines solutions they are agreed to by the subject.

**Outcome:** Checklist can serve as documentation that client may take to MD for referral to PT/OT services to address

**Reference:** [Environmental assessment of interior of home environment](http://www.stopfalls.org/files/ProgramExpansion-HomeAssessmentTool.pdf)

# PATIENT/CAREGIVER

## AgriLife EXTENSION- Bathroom Safety for Older People

**Purpose:** Patient/Provider education material for improving bathroom safety. Provides examples and pictures for proper placement of home safety equipment.

**Objectives:** To provide education of bathroom safety options and their recommended use.

**Structure: Four page** Handout with pictures of properly installed bathroom safety equipment including bathmats, safety bars, tub seats, shower hoses, elevated toilet seats and grab bars. Four pages in length.

**Process:** A patient education handout to be used by providers, patients and caregivers to recommend proper installation/placement of bathroom safety devices.

**Outcomes:** Safely installed bathroom safety equipment

**Reference:** [Bathroom Safety for Older People](http://fcs.tamu.edu/families/aging/fall_prevention/home_assessment_tools.php)

## Fall Prevention Checklist-EASYLIVING Home Care

**Purpose:** Handout addresses 2 major causes of falls and identifies some situations that predispose individual to falls in the home.

**Objective:** To provides a checklist by rooms of home in order to identify potential problem areas relating to falls.

**Process:** Two page handout. Individual completes checklist by room and follows recommended solution to decrease fall hazards by room. Form also provides checklist for general safety around the home including intrinsic factors.

**Outcome:** Checklist organized by room of home and exterior. Provides general safety and healthful living suggestions. Two pages long.

**Reference:** [Easy Living Falls Prevention Checklist](http://www.easylivingfl.com/wp-content/uploads/resources/Fall-Prevention-Checklist-1.pdf)

## Minnesota Safety Council- Fall Prevention Home Safety Checklist What YOU Can Do To Prevent Falls

**Purpose:** Patient education checklist and handout for fall prevention

**Objectives:** To address fall risks in rooms within the home and personal risk factures.

**Structure:** Electronic checklist with Forty- six Yes/No questions with patient education provided for each “yes” answer.

**Process:** Patient completes checklist. “Yes” answers provide additional education. Checklist can serve to prompt areas of concern/questions to be discussed with health care providers and caregivers.

**Outcomes:** Potential falls risks both within the home and from the individual.

**Reference:** [Falls Prevention Home Safety Checklist](http://www.mnsafetycouncil.org/seniorsafe/falls/)

## Fall Prevention at Home-NCPS Fall Toolkit

**Purpose:** Provide brief, general information on fall prevention addressing lighting, floor surface and bathroom. Information is provided in handout form. Item also lists some intrinsic reasons for falls. Tool also provides information for bathroom safety and functional modifications to decrease fall risk.

**Objective:** To provide safety interventions for areas of home including to improve lighting, address clutter and examine floor surface.

**Process:** Provides general information on interventions for falls around the home in Tri-fold handout form.

**Structure:**  Single page tri-fold handout .

**Reference:** [Fall Prevention at Home tri-fold](http://www.patientsafety.va.gov/docs/fallsToolkit/fall_prevention_at_home.pdf)

## Check for Safety-A home Fall Prevention Checklist for Older Adults. Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

**Purpose:** Handout addresses common areas of falls in the home. Provides fall reduction strategies in kitchen, bathrooms, bedrooms, on stairwells and floor surfaces.

**Objective:** To identify hazards in the home contributing to fall risk and provide solutions for hazards. The hand out addresses medication and exercise

**Process:** Checklist for the home asks about hazards in the home and offers solution for problems found. Provides additional general information on strategies for fall reduction

**Structure:** 14 page color booklet

**Outcome:** Questionnaire about existing problems and solution defined for the problem.

**Reference:** [Check for Safety at Home](http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Falls/CheckListForSafety.html)

1. Gillespie LD, Robertson M, Gillespie WJ, Sherrington C, Gates S, Clemson LM, Lamb SE. Interventions for preventing falls in older people living in the community. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2013, Issue 9. Art. No.: CD007146. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD007146.pub3 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)