

# Is your home ready?

What to fix, what to watch for, and how to know if home is still the right call.



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# The reality of aging in place

36 million older adults fall each year in the U.S.  
80% of those falls happen at home.  
Yet, 3 in 4 want to stay in their own home as they age.



# Most people wait too long to ask the right questions

A fall. A hospitalization. A moment where the house suddenly feels less like home and more like a hazard.

This guide exists to help you get ahead of that moment, using CAPS (Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist) standards.

*The goal isn't to make a home look like a hospital. It's to make it safe enough to stay.*



# The front door is often the first barrier

Steep steps, narrow doorways, and uneven thresholds cause more falls than most families realize.

- **Steps & Ramps:** 2+ steps require a ramp or lift. Risers should be uniform (under 7").
- **Handrails:** Graspable rails (1.25" to 1.5" diameter) must extend the full length on both sides.
- **Doorways:** 32" clear opening is the minimum. Use lever-style hardware.
- **Thresholds:** Zero-threshold or beveled entries (under 0.5") eliminate trip hazards.



# Low-barrier adjustments for a safer entry

Simple changes set the tone for the rest of the home and eliminate daily friction.

1  
Keypad lock to eliminate fumbling with keys.

2  
Bench and hook for sitting while putting on shoes.

3  
Doorbell and intercom reachable from a seated position.



# Targeted modifications in the bathroom have the highest impact

Wet surfaces and awkward movements make this the most fall-prone room.

- **Grab Bars:** The single most impactful modification. Must anchor to studs, not drywall. ADA-compliant bars come in stylish finishes.
- **Shower Access:** A roll-in or zero-threshold shower is the gold standard.
- **Toilet Height:** Standard toilets sit at 15". Comfort-height toilets at 17–19" are dramatically easier to use.



# Immediate upgrades for bathroom safety

High impact per dollar spent without major renovations.

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1

Handheld showerhead with a sliding bar for flexibility.

2

Fold-down shower seat (even if not needed yet).



3

Install a comfort-height toilet if remodeling.

Note: Never use the toilet paper holder as a grab bar—it will not hold.

# Reducing effort in the kitchen without sacrificing function

The kitchen isn't typically where falls happen—it's where fatigue and frustration build over time.

- **Counter Heights:** A 28"–34" lowered section with knee clearance allows seated prep work.
- **Cabinet Access:** Pull-out shelves below and lazy Susans in corners dramatically improve access.
- **Appliances:** Side-opening ovens, front-control cooktops, and counter-height microwaves eliminate dangerous reaching.
- **Flooring:** Textured tile, cork, or matte vinyl reduces slipping.



# Simple kitchen modifications to preserve energy

Small swaps that keep frequently used items within comfortable reach.

1  
Replace round knobs with D-ring or bar pulls.

2  
Pull-out step stool built into the toe kick for occasional higher reach.

3  
Lightweight rolling cart for moving items instead of carrying.

1  
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# Managing the ten-foot danger zone at night

Most nighttime falls happen within 10 feet of the bed on the way to the bathroom, when balance and reaction times are compromised.

- **Bed Height:** Ideal height for safe transfers is 20"–23" from the floor. Beds under 18" or over 25" increase fall risk.
- **Pathways:** Maintain a clear, unobstructed path to the bathroom—at least 36" wide. Remove area rugs.
- **Lighting:** Ensure adequate lighting without the need to search for a switch in the dark.



# Creating a safer nighttime environment

Obstacle removal and automatic lighting are your best defenses.

1. Bed rail or half-rail for support when sitting up.

2. Motion-sensor lights that activate at a low, non-blinding level.

3. Charged phone or medical alert device within arm's reach.



# Catching the invisible hazards connecting your spaces

The most dangerous hazards are rarely the focus of a renovation.

- **Lighting:** Older adults need 2-3x more light. Replace 60W equivalents with 100W equivalents. Shadows and dim hallways are hazards.
- **Flooring:** Loose area rugs are the leading cause of falls. Remove them or use non-slip backing. Transitions must be flush.
- **Smart Tech:** Voice-controlled lights, thermostats, and video doorbells reduce the need to rush across the room.
- **Stairs:** Secure handrails on both sides. Uniform, non-slip treads.



# Immediate actions for the entire home

A systematic walk-through is the most reliable way to catch hidden risks.



- 2.** Tape down all rug corners immediately—it takes 2 minutes.

- 1.** Walk through at night with lights off to find dark spots.



- 3.** Install night lights in every room that gets used after dark.

# The CAPS-Aligned Home Safety Checklist

## Entrances

- Handrails on both sides
- Steps even
- 32"+ doorways
- No-step entry
- Exterior lighting

## Bathroom

- Grab bars at toilet/shower
- Non-slip surface
- Handheld showerhead
- 17–19" toilet height
- 60" clear floor space

## Kitchen

- No loose rugs
- Items in reach
- Pull-out lower shelves
- Lever faucets
- Task lighting

## Bedroom

- 20–23" bed height
- 36" clear path to bath
- Reachable bedside lamp
- Phone within reach

## Throughout

- Rugs secured
- No loose cords
- Accessible switches
- Smoke/CO detectors
- Handrails secure

# Don't guess. Assess.

Our CAPS-certified home safety assessment walks through every room, identifies what needs attention, and gives you a prioritized plan with real cost estimates.

**Start your assessment at: [palmelle.com/assessment](https://palmelle.com/assessment)**