

# HOME FAST

## Working together to prevent falls



**Environment checklist developed by:** Mackenzie, L., Byles, J., Higginbotham, N. (2000). "Designing the Home Falls and Accidents Screening Tool (HOME FAST): Selecting the items." *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 63: 260-9

Home Fast was developed and trialled in Australia by researchers at the University of Newcastle and has been adopted by many service providers in clinical and research settings in Australia, the United Kingdom and Canada. This screening tool can be used by any health professional to identify seniors at increased risk of falls and to help facilitate referral for more detailed assessment and interventions. The tool includes 25 questions and a definition for each question. A **no response** indicates that action is required. A comment section follows each question.

(Downloadable)

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In 2005 the Department of Human Services funded the National Ageing Research Institute to review and recommend a set of falls prevention resources for general use which will be available from the department's Aged Care website <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/agedcare>. The department would like to thank the researchers at the University of Newcastle for allowing us to publish this document on this website.

# The Home Falls and Accidents Screening Tool (HOME FAST)

Mackenzie, L., J. Byles, et al. (2000). "Designing the Home Falls and Accidents Screening Tool (HOME FAST): Selecting the items." *British Journal of Occupational Therapy* 63: 260-9.

**Definition:** Home refers to both the inside and outside of a person's residential property. As the checklist will be used for visits during the day, answers need to consider the same home environment at night.

## FLOORS

1. Are the walkways free of cords and other clutter?

*Definition: No cords or clutter (e.g. boxes, newspapers, objects) across or encroaching on walkways/doorways. Includes furniture and other items which obstruct doorways, or hallways, items behind doors preventing doors opening fully, raised thresholds in doorways.*

1 = Yes            2 = No

2. Are the floor coverings in good condition?

*Definition: carpets/mats lie flat/no tears/not threadbare/no cracked or missing tiles – including coverings on stairs.*

1 = Yes            2 = No

3. Are the floor surfaces non-slip?

*Definition: Score 'no' if lino or tiles are in the kitchen, bathroom or laundry, in addition to any polished floor, or tiles/lino surfaces elsewhere. Can only score 'yes' if, in addition to other rooms, the kitchen, bathroom and laundry have non-slip or slip resistant floor surfaces.*

1 = Yes            2 = No

4. Are loose mats securely fixed to the floor?

*Definition: Mats have effective slip resistant backing/are taped or nailed to the floor.*

1 = Yes            2 = No            3 = N/A (there are no mats in the house)

## FURNITURE

5. Can the person get in and out of bed easily and safely?

*Definition: Bed is of adequate height and firmness. Person does not need to pull self up on bedside furniture.*

1 = Yes            2 = No            3 = N/A

6. Can the person get up from the lounge chair easily and safely?

*Definition: Chair is of adequate height, chair arms are accessible to push up from, seat cushion is not too soft or deep.*

1 = Yes            2 = No            3 = N/A (person uses wheelchair constantly)

## LIGHTING

7. Are all the lights bright enough for the person to see clearly?

*Definition: No globes to be less than 75w, no shadows thrown across rooms, no excess glare.*

1 = Yes            2 = No

8. Can the person switch a light on easily from his or her bed?

*Definition: Person does not have to get out of bed to switch a light on at night – has a flashlight or bedside lamp.*

1 = Yes            2 = No

9. Are the outside paths, steps and entrances well lit at night?

*Definition: Lights exist over back and front doors, globes at least 75w, walkways used exposed to light – including communal lobbies.*

1 = Yes            2 = No            3 = N/A (no outside path, step or entrance – access door opens straight onto public footpath)

## **BATHROOM**

10. Is the person able to get on and off the toilet easily and safely?

*Definition: Toilet is of adequate height, person does not need to hold on to sink/towel rail/toilet roll holder to get up, rail exists beside toilet, if needed.*

1 = Yes            2 = No            3 = N/A (person uses commode constantly)

11. Is the person able to get in and out of the bath easily and safely?

*Definition: Person is able to step over the edge of the bath without risk, and can lower himself or herself into the bath and get up again without needing to grab onto furniture (or uses bathboard, or stands to use shower over bath without risk).*

1 = Yes            2 = No            3 = N/A (no bath in the home, or bath never used)

12. Is the person able to walk in and out of the shower recess easily and safely?

*Definition: Person can step over shower hob, or screen tracks without risk and without having to hold onto anything for support.*

1 = Yes            2 = No            3 = N/A (no shower recess in the home)

13. Is there an accessible/sturdy grab rail/s in the shower or beside the bath?

*Definition: Rails which are fixed securely, which are not towel rails, and which can be reached without leaning enough to lose balance.*

1 = Yes            2 = No

14. Are slip resistant mats used in the bath/bathroom/shower recess?

*Definition: Well-maintained slip resistant rubber mats, or non-slip strips in the base of the bath or shower recess.*

1 = Yes            2 = No

15. Is the toilet in close proximity to the bedroom?

*Definition: No more than two doorways away (including the bedroom door) – does not involve going outside or unlocking doors to reach it.*

1 = Yes            2 = No

## **STORAGE**

16. Can the person easily reach items in the kitchen that are used regularly without climbing, bending or upsetting his or her balance?

*Definition: Cupboards are accessible between shoulder and knee height – no chairs/stepladders are required to reach things.*

1 = Yes            2 = No

17. Can the person carry meals easily and safely from the kitchen to the dining area?

*Definition: Meals can be carried safely or transported using a trolley to wherever the person usually eats.*

1 = Yes            2 = No

## STAIRWAYS/STEPS

18. Do the **indoor** steps/stairs have an accessible/sturdy grab rail extending along the full length of the steps/stairs?

*Definition: Grab rail must be easily gripped, firmly fixed, sufficiently robust and available for the full length of the steps or stairs.*

1 = Yes            2 = No            3 = N/A (No steps or stairs exist inside the home)

19. Do the **outdoor** steps have an accessible/sturdy grab rail extending along the full length of the steps/stairs?

*Definition: Steps = more than two consecutive steps (changes in floor level). Grab rail must be easily gripped, firmly fixed, sufficiently robust and available for the full length of the steps.*

1 = Yes            2 = No            3 = N/A (No steps exist outside the home)

20. Can the person easily and safely go up and down the steps/stairs, inside or outside the house?

*Definition: Steps are not too high, too narrow or too uneven for feet to be firmly placed on the steps (indoors and outdoors), person is not likely to become tired or breathless using the steps/stairs and has no medical factor likely to impact on safety on the stairs, e.g. foot-drop, loss of sensation in feet, impaired control of movement etc.*

1 = Yes            2 = No            3 = N/A (No steps or stairs exist)

21. Are the edges of the steps/stairs easily identified?

*Definition: No patterned floor coverings, tiles or painting which could obscure the edge of the step.*

1 = Yes            2 = No            3 = N/A (No steps or stairs exist)

22. Can the person use the entrance door/s safely and easily?

*Definition: Locks and bolts can be used without bending or over-reaching, there is a landing so the person does not have to balance on steps to open the door and/or screen door.*

1 = Yes            2 = No

## MOBILITY

23. Are the paths around the house in good repair, and free of clutter?

*Definition: no cracked/loose pathways, overgrowing plants/weeds, overhanging trees, garden hoses encroaching on walkways.*

1 = Yes            2 = No            3 = N/A (No garden, path or yard exists)

24. Is the person wearing well fitting slippers and shoes?

*Definition: Person currently wearing supportive, firmly fitting shoes with low heels and non-slip soles or slippers which have not worn and support the foot in a good position.*

1 = Yes            2 = No

25. If there are pets, can the person care for them without bending and being at risk of falling over?

*Definition: Pets = any animals that the person has responsibility for. Person does not have to feed pets when pets are jumping up or getting underfoot, person does not have to bend to the floor without available support to feed or clean pets, pets do not require a lot of exercise.*

1 = Yes            2 = No            3 = N/A (there are no pets/animals)