

Mind your Step!

Preventing trips and slips

Trips and slips can result in broken bones, bruises and even death. Like all accidents, they can be avoided with a little care. Exercising regularly to improve your balance and coordination can also help. Remember that young children and elderly people tend to be less coordinated and more at risk from trips and slips.

Some potential dangers:

Electrical cables - Our homes are full of wires and cables that could cause someone to trip or to pull over a heavy or hot device. Use cordless devices if possible, or at least make sure that cords are curled up or tied neatly and never leave them trailing across doorways or rooms.

Mess - Any clutter left on the floor (e.g. books, DVDs, stereo speakers, school bags, sports kits, clothes) is a trip hazard. Keep floors clear, especially near stairs.

Rugs, carpets and uneven flooring - Make sure rugs and carpets are smoothed out flat and not buckled or turned up at the edges. Remember that rugs on slippery floors can easily slip. Point out any uneven flooring to visitors, so they can watch their step.

Bathtubs and showers - The combination of soap and water is very slippery. Use a non-stick bathmat if possible. Keep the bath and shower clean so that slippery soap scum doesn't build up. Try to position the shower curtain so that water doesn't splash on the floor.

Wet floors - Vinyl, tiled or polished wood floors tend to be particularly slippery when wet. Mop up spilled drinks or food as soon as possible and warn other people in the house if the floor is slippery.

Footwear - Choose shoes with good grip. Remember that wearing socks or slippers can easily cause you to slip on the floor. Wearing shoes that are the wrong size or uncomfortable can make it more likely to trip over.

Outside - Alert an adult to any loose stones or uneven pathways in the garden, or any tools left lying around.

Darkness and visibility - Any restriction to visibility makes it more likely you'll trip or slip. Turn on the light if you're going to the bathroom or moving about the house at night. If you need glasses, make sure you wear them so you can easily spot hazards.

Case Study: Slips and drowning

Slips near to water (e.g. ponds, baths, paddling pools, swimming pools) are especially dangerous because there is an added risk of drowning if the person loses consciousness. It's possible to drown in only a few centimetres of water.

It's important to:

- let your family know when you're having a bath, and empty the bath as soon as you've finished with it
- walk carefully in the bathroom and around pools or ponds
- keep areas around water clear of objects
- use handrails if they're available
- watch out for younger brothers and sisters – don't let them run around or play by the bath, pool or pond.