

FREE PRINTABLE CHECKLIST

23-Point Bathroom Fall-Prevention Checklist

For Families Caring for an Aging Parent in Pennsylvania

The bathroom is the most dangerous room in an elderly person's home. This checklist gives you every modification — in priority order — so you can walk the bathroom with a pen and check off each change as you make it.

How to use this checklist: Walk your parent's bathroom. Check off each item that is already in place. Circle the ones that are missing. Start with items 5, 10, and 14 — they deliver the most fall-prevention benefit per dollar spent. The entire list can be addressed in one weekend.

1 in 4

older adults falls
each year (CDC)

23

specific changes
on this list

\$300–800

cost for basic
upgrades installed

Reviewed by [Melinda Piechoski, RN · Director of Nursing](#) · A-Team Home Care · May 2026
Sources: CDC STEADI, National Institute on Aging, AARP HomeFit Guide, 2010 ADA Standards

ZONE 1 — FLOOR & TRACTION (ITEMS 1–4)

- 1 **Replace bath mat with a non-slip mat (full-surface suction cups)**
Cheap mats slide under wet feet. A rubber mat with suction cups across the entire base does not.
- 2 **Install non-slip strips or textured mat inside tub or shower base**
Wet porcelain has the friction of ice rink for older skin. Adhesive strips solve this for under \$20.
- 3 **Remove throw rugs — replace with low-pile, rubber-backed mat only**
Throw rugs are the #1 cited bathroom trip hazard in NIA fall-prevention literature.
- 4 **Wipe up water immediately, every time — keep microfiber towel at hand height**
The post-shower puddle has caused more hip fractures than any single architectural feature.

ZONE 2 — TUB & SHOWER (ITEMS 5–9)

- 5 **Install wall-mounted grab bar inside shower/tub — anchored into studs** ADA
ADA Section 609: 1¼–1½" diameter, 33–36" above floor, 250 lb minimum load.
Suction-cup bars are NOT a substitute.
- 6 **Install vertical grab bar at the tub/shower entry point**
The transition step is where most bathing falls occur. The vertical bar gives something to pull against.
- 7 **Add a shower bench or transfer chair**
Standing on wet feet for 10 minutes fatigues older legs. A seat eliminates standing-balance failure.
- 8 **Replace fixed shower head with hand-held wand on a long hose**
The senior can sit on the bench and wash without contortion or balance risk.
- 9 **Convert tub to curbless or low-threshold shower if budget allows**
The 14-inch step over a tub wall is the highest-risk movement in the home. Removing it removes the risk.

ZONE 3 — TOILET AREA (ITEMS 10–13)

- 10 **Install grab bars beside the toilet — one wall-mounted on strong-arm side** ADA
ADA: 42" min on side wall, 36" behind. Sit-to-stand transfers are the 2nd most-common fall scenario.
- 11 **Add a raised toilet seat (3–5 inches)**
Sitting lower than knee height demands quad strength most seniors no longer have.
- 12 **Place a contrasting mat at the foot of the toilet for low-light visibility**
Vision-impaired seniors miss the bowl edge in monochrome bathrooms at night.
- 13 **Keep path to toilet clear at all times (no trash cans, scales, laundry)**
The middle-of-the-night trip is the highest-fall-risk moment of the 24-hour day.

ZONE 4 — LIGHTING (ITEMS 14–17)

- 14 **Increase vanity light to 700–1,000 lumens, daylight color temperature**
Older eyes need 3–4× more light than younger eyes for the same visual acuity.
- 15 **Add motion-activated nightlight or floor-level light strip (bedroom to bathroom path)**
Eliminates fumbling for the wall switch at 2 a.m. when balance is worst.
- 16 **Use motion-activated light inside bathroom (turns on when door opens)**
No reaching for a switch with one hand on the doorframe and one hand half-asleep.
- 17 **Keep flashlight in bedside table for power outages**
A pitch-dark bathroom trip during a power outage causes falls the rest of the home was set up to prevent.

ZONE 5 — GRAB BAR INSTALLATION (ITEMS 18–19)

- 18 **Have ALL grab bars professionally installed into wall studs — never drywall alone**
A bar pulled off mid-fall causes a worse injury than no bar at all. Hire a contractor or OT-trained installer.
- 19 **Choose a finish your parent will actually accept (brushed nickel, matte black)**
Modern finishes look like towel rails. Resistance is usually aesthetic — resolve the aesthetic, resolve the resistance.

ZONE 6 — FAUCETS & WATER (ITEMS 20–22)

- 20 **Replace round faucet knobs with single-lever or paddle handles**
Arthritic hands cannot grip and rotate a small round knob. A lever takes one push.
- 21 **Set water heater to 120°F to prevent scald burns**
Per AARP home safety checklist: scalds at 130°F+ are a serious senior burn risk. Older skin burns faster.
- 22 **Install anti-scald (thermostatic mixing) valve in the shower**
~\$150 in parts. Prevents a hospitalizable burn for older adults whose skin recovers slowly.

ZONE 7 — EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION (ITEM 23)

- 23 **Install waterproof emergency-call button or keep charged phone within arm's reach**
Time to first call determines outcome. A senior who calls within 10 minutes has far better outcomes than one who waits 6 hours on the floor.

Start Here: Three Changes That Deliver the Most Protection

If you can only make three changes this weekend, make these:

1. **Grab bars** at the toilet and inside the shower (items 5, 10) — professionally installed into studs
2. **Shower bench** with a hand-held wand (items 7, 8) — eliminates standing-balance failure

A-Team Home Care Assists With Bathing and Fall Recovery

After a fall — or before one happens — A-Team's home health aides assist with bathing, transfers, dressing, and grooming under an RN-supervised care plan. We also perform **free in-home safety assessments** in Philadelphia, Bucks, Montgomery, Delaware, and Chester counties.

Call (215) 490-9994 · service@ateampa.com · ateampa.com

Disclaimer: This checklist provides general educational information about bathroom safety modifications and is not medical advice. ADA specifications are from the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design, Section 609. Cost estimates based on national averages and may vary by contractor and region. Always consult a licensed contractor before structural changes. A-Team Home Care is an ACHC-accredited home care agency serving Pennsylvania.

Sources: CDC STEADI · National Institute on Aging · AARP HomeFit Guide · 2010 ADA Standards (U.S. Access Board) · AARP Home Safety Checklist · American Geriatrics Society