



The 23-Point Bathroom Safety Checklist

The bathroom is where most senior falls happen. This is the room-by-room checklist our RNs use, including the things families rarely know to ask for, and what insurance may pay for.

Floors & Entry

1. **Remove throw rugs entirely.** Even rugs with "non-slip" backing are a leading fall cause. If one must stay, tape all four edges to the floor.
2. **Make water visible.** Use a bath mat with suction you can see the edge of, plus a second absorbent mat just outside the tub. Wet tile is nearly invisible.
3. **Doors should open outward** (or be a pocket door). If someone falls against an inward door, help cannot get in.
4. **Keep a clear, lit path** from the bed to the bathroom. Most falls happen on nighttime trips.

Shower & Tub

1. **Grab bars must go into wall studs** or solid blocking, never suction-cup bars, which fail without warning.
2. **Use two bars:** one vertical at the tub entry, one horizontal along the wall. A single bar is not enough for a safe transfer.
3. **A transfer bench beats a shower chair** for anyone who cannot step over the tub wall (legs sit outside and inside the tub).
4. **Add a handheld shower head** so bathing can be done seated. This reduces fall risk more than most families expect.
5. **Set the water heater to 120°F.** Older skin scalds faster, and the scald reflex itself causes falls.

Toilet Area

1. **Raise the seat height** with a raised toilet seat or a safety frame with arms. Sit-to-stand is a top fall moment.
2. **Keep a bedside commode** for nighttime so no one walks to the bathroom half-asleep.
3. **Never pull up on a towel bar or the sink.** They are not weight-rated. Install a real grab bar beside the toilet.

Lighting & Reach

1. **Motion-sensor nightlights** in the bathroom and hallway so no one fumbles for a switch in the dark.
2. **Keep daily items between hip and shoulder height** so there is no reaching up or bending down.

3. **Put a call button or waterproof phone in the bathroom.** A fall should not become a long wait on the floor.

What Insurance May Cover, the Part Most Families Miss

1. **Original Medicare usually will NOT pay** for grab bars, shower chairs, or raised toilet seats. It calls them "convenience items." Do not assume they are covered.
2. **But Medicare Part B WILL cover a bedside commode chair** when a doctor documents you cannot safely reach the toilet. Ask your doctor to write the order.
3. **Check your Medicare Advantage plan.** Many include a yearly over-the-counter allowance (often up to about \$500, varies by plan) that can buy safety devices. Call the number on your card.
4. **PA Medicaid (Community HealthChoices)** through Keystone First, UPMC CHC, or PA Health & Wellness can cover home adaptations, including bathroom modifications, for eligible members. Ask your service coordinator about "home modifications."
5. **Veterans:** the VA HISA grant provides up to \$6,800 lifetime for roll-in showers, grab bars, and widened doorways, with a prescription from your VA provider.
6. **Get it prescribed.** A written order from a physician or therapist is often what gets coverage approved that would otherwise be denied.
7. **Buy from a Medicare-approved supplier** when a benefit applies. Buying retail first usually forfeits the reimbursement.
8. **Have a professional walk your home.** A home care agency can spot hazards you cannot see and help you request the right equipment through the right program.

Caring for a loved one? You may be able to get paid for it.

Through Pennsylvania's family caregiver programs, A-Team can help you get paid to care for your family member, plus our **\$2,000 Quality Care Program**. One free call tells you if you qualify. Call **(215) 490-9994** or email **service@ateampa.com**.