

## **Be Organized – Be Safe**

Knick-knacks, magazines, electronics, pictures, keepsakes, rugs, and tables. These common household items seem harmless enough, but the more we have in our homes, the more difficult it can be to move! Sometimes we have so much stuff it can block doorways or paths to exit the house—dangerous in the case of a fire! Think about all the dust that collects on the surfaces of figurines, picture frames, and other ornamental pieces. It can make dusting a real chore but more importantly it can make breathing more difficult as well.

As you can see, there are lots of health and safety reasons to motivate you to get organized. But where to start? Here are a few things to do, to make the rooms in your home easy to navigate.

### **Bathroom**

Take a look through the magazine rack and let go of any out of date magazines. If you have a bathmat, make sure it is rubber backed and out of the way for you to get to the toilet. Keep a towel out to wipe up any water to prevent slips. Try to limit the amount of items around your sink so dust doesn't gather there. Take a minute to get rid of expired medications and other toiletries. Keep a first aid kit easily accessible and don't forget a nightlight!

### **Living room and bedroom**

Make sure there is a phone on every level of your home. Make sure the furniture is arranged to give you plenty of room to move about. Eliminate floor mats as they are a tripping hazard and keep items off the floor. Consider getting rid of extra tables if you do not have adequate space. Tidy up tangled cords and use power bars where multiple items are plugged in. Run cords around the perimeter of the room instead of across the floor. Keep craft supplies tucked away in a basket to be pulled out when needed. Take a minute to let go of any supplies you have not used for a long time. Pick a few favorite pictures to display and put the others in a photo album or photo box. Make sure the table is kept clear for you to set items such as a cup of tea or a notepad on. Lots of paper is hard on the respiratory system and a fire hazard. Recycle old newspapers, magazines, and go through your files to eliminate no longer useful items.

### **Kitchen**

For many of us the days of cooking large meals and entertaining are not as often as they used to be. There was a time when you cooked and used many more utensils, pots and pans and dishes than you do now. It's time to simplify your life and let go of the items that no longer suit your lifestyle. Take a look in your cupboards and see what you no longer use. Store heavy items in low cupboards and drawers; keep items you use frequently at eye level and within reach. If you need to reach something high, use a sturdy step stool or ask for assistance. Store your oven mitts close to the stove and keep all cleaners in labeled bottles.

#### Stairs

Don't leave items on the stairs. Instead use a table or basket next to the stairs. Make sure your stair rail is sturdy and your stairwell is well lit. Be careful going up and down stairs in long clothing like night gowns, robes, slippers or sandals which may slip off or trip you.

#### Foyer

Have a bench for sitting to put on and remove shoes. This is especially helpful in the winter. Some benches have storage under the seat (great for hats and shopping bags). Have a place for wet boots to dry--wet floors are a slipping hazard. Hooks are a good option for easily tiding up coats and scarves. Hang them within reach.

#### Outside

Keep sand or salt for steps close at hand in bin near the door – and don't forget a scoop.

Be sure to put away garden tools after use. Reposition your mailbox if it is difficult for you to reach or see inside. Turn on the outside light if you know you will be returning after dark and make sure your house number is visible from the road and at night.

Taking time everyday to go through one drawer, one cupboard, or one closet can make your home a safer space. Plus, you'll be able to help local families in need of household items by donating items you no longer use. Organizing is good for the health and good for the heart! Be organized and be safe.

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