

Home Safety

Assessment Checklist

Each year 1 in 3 Irish people aged 65 years and older are involved in accidental falls.

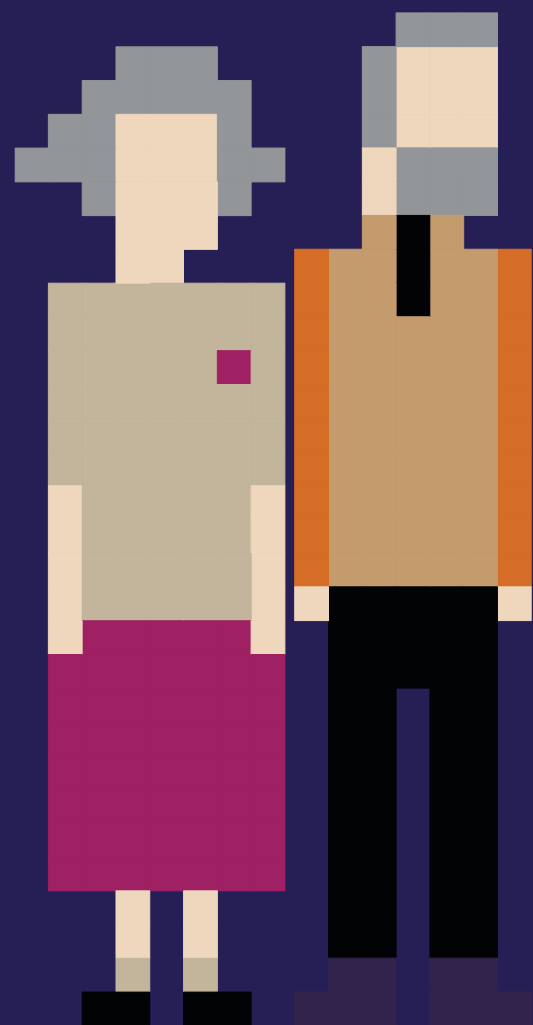
Falls lead to

- Physical injuries
- Increase risk of hospitalisation
- Psychological & societal consequences

Direct and indirect societal costs of falls in Ireland annually exceed €500,000,000.00

MOST OF THESE ARE PREVENTABLE

Reduce your risk of falling or tripping by identifying the possible risks in your house.



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Falls and the damage they do are one of the biggest issues facing senior health, independence and mobility.

Maybe your home was once filled with teenagers and how you organise your space has not changed since those times. Now that the nest is empty, it is a good idea to reassess your needs and how your home best functions for you. This may mean a good declutter is in order. Do you really need all those plates and cups anymore? Are you entertaining as much, perhaps a lot of the serving dishes could find new homes? Is the bookcase full of old books that you will not read? Have you too many chairs in your living room? By reducing the amount of things in your home, you free up valuable floor and shelf space which will in turn give you greater circulation space within the home.

This Home Safety Assessment Checklist is designed to help you to identify potential fall risks within your home. Once you have identified these risk areas you can set about putting them right. In designing the list we have attempted to make it all-inclusive but as you go around your home you might notice other risks that are unique to your home.

Home modification or re-arrangement, is the conversion or adaptation of the environment in order to make performing tasks easier, reduce accidents and support independent living.

How to use the home safety assessment checklist to identify, and then remedy, home hazards and prevent falls.

First you will need a clipboard and pen. It might be a good idea to ask a family member or friend to walk around with you. After all, four eyes are better than two.

Walk around each room of your home with this checklist. Look for the risks that are listed on each page. Mark them on the drawing and note them. 1 for the first one, 2 for the second, 3 for the third and so on. Also keep an eye out for any risks you spot that may be unique to your home, then note and number these accordingly.

After checking all of the rooms in your home you will have a total number. This is the number of issues you need to address.

Then go through the solutions and decide the necessary action to fix those problems that are a potential hazard. Make sure that you look at assistive devices and helpful products that are indicated in the solutions section. Having them can make your home safer.

Use the Action Plan to note what steps you are going to take. Write down what action you are planning to take for each numbered problem, the estimated cost of this action and when you hope to have it achieved. This gives you a clear idea of what is involved and how much it is likely to cost you. It is worth noting that a lot of the items covered here have no cost associated with them. They simply involve rearranging the way you think about your rooms and move around within your home.

It may also be a good idea to give a copy of this booklet for the family members you visit with, so they can assess their homes, and take some simple steps to remedy any problem areas. A quick assessment of their home will prevent falls when visiting. Also, talk to friends about this plan. Recommend that they get a copy of this booklet and assess their own homes.

Total number of risks identified

Take the total scores for each room from the previous pages and write them in the appropriate boxes. Then add all the scores to get a grand total.

Front Door and Front Garden	
Back Door or Side Door and Paths	
Hall	
Sitting Room	
Kitchen	
Dining Room/Area	
Utility Room	

WC	
Landing & Stairs	
Bedroom	
En-suite	
Bathroom	
TOTAL NUMBER OF HOME HAZARDS	

Front door and front garden

This list identifies all of the potential home hazards that may cause a fall. If the item applies to your home, circle it and place a number in the box. Write down any hazards unique to your home in the space below.

Entrance to back door or side door and paths

This list identifies all of the potential home hazards that may cause a fall. If the item applies to your home, circle it and place a number in the box. Write down any hazards unique to your home in the space below.

Hall

This list identifies all of the potential home hazards that may cause a fall. If the item applies to your home, circle it and place a number in the box. Write down any hazards unique to your home in the space below.

Sitting room

This list identifies all of the potential home hazards that may cause a fall. If the item applies to your home, circle it and place a number in the box. Write down any hazards unique to your home in the space below.

Kitchen

This list identifies all of the potential home hazards that may cause a fall. If the item applies to your home, circle it and place a number in the box. Write down any hazards unique to your home in the space below.

Dining room/dining area

This list identifies all of the potential home hazards that may cause a fall. If the item applies to your home, circle it and place a number in the box. Write down any hazards unique to your home in the space below.

Sitting room

This list identifies all of the potential home hazards that may cause a fall. If the item applies to your home, circle it and place a number in the box. Write down any hazards unique to your home in the space below.

Utility room

This list identifies all of the potential home hazards that may cause a fall. If the item applies to your home, circle it and place a number in the box. Write down any hazards unique to your home in the space below.

WC

This list identifies all of the potential home hazards that may cause a fall. If the item applies to your home, circle it and place a number in the box. Write down any hazards unique to your home in the space below.

Landing and stairs

This list identifies all of the potential home hazards that may cause a fall. If the item applies to your home, circle it and place a number in the box. Write down any hazards unique to your home in the space below.

Bedroom

This list identifies all of the potential home hazards that may cause a fall. If the item applies to your home, circle it and place a number in the box. Write down any hazards unique to your home in the space below.

En-suite

This list identifies all of the potential home hazards that may cause a fall. If the item applies to your home, circle it and place a number in the box. Write down any hazards unique to your home in the space below.

Bathroom

This list identifies all of the potential home hazards that may cause a fall. If the item applies to your home, circle it and place a number in the box. Write down any hazards unique to your home in the space below.

Front door and front garden

1 Uneven or cracked driveway

Have any uneven or cracked parts of your driveway repaired. In the short-term avoid these areas if possible when walking to and from the home. If the paths outside your home are damaged, contact your local council for repair.

2 Uneven or cracked path up to door

Have any uneven or cracked path repaired. In the short-term avoid these areas if possible when walking to and from the home.

3 Slippery surface after rainfall

Check steps and pathways to see how slippery they become when wet. Take action with non-slip driveway paint.

4 Lack of a wheelchair ramp

Use a wheelchair ramp. If these sizings are unsuitable, have a ramp constructed that will allow wheelchair access in and out of the home.

5 Unmarked step or raised area

Paint edge of steps or other raised areas with contrasting outdoor paint color to increase awareness of change in height.

6 Unsteady or unsuitable railings

Check railings to ensure they will support your weight. Repair if they are loose or broken.

7 Unsafe steps - too steep, too uneven, cracked

Repair broken or cracked steps. Consider installing a ramp.

8 Lack of exterior lighting

Install an outdoor light fixture, one which has a sensor light that automatically turns on and off.

9 Raised threshold

Mark threshold with coloured paint.

10 Lack of grabrails

Add an outdoor grabrail next to the door.



Consider putting a seat or low bench at the door. You can place shopping on it while you open the door and not have to bend down to pick it up off the ground. A hook is also a good idea, for hooking a shopping bag while you open the door.



✓ Checklist:

- ☐ Uneven or cracked driveway
- ☐ Uneven or cracked path up to door
- ☐ Slippery surface after rainfall. Lack of a wheelchair ramp
- ☐ Unmarked steps - too steep, too uneven, cracked
- ☐ Unsteady or unsuitable railings
- ☐ Unsafe steps - too steep, too uneven, cracked
- ☐ Lack of exterior lighting
- ☐ Raised threshold
- ☐ Lack of grab rails

Other Hazards?



Entrance to back door or side door and paths

1 Lack of grabrails

Add an outdoor grabrail next to the door.

2 Unmarked step or raised area

Paint edge of steps or other raised areas with contrasting outdoor paint color to increase awareness of change in height.

3 Lack of exterior lighting

Install an outdoor light fixture, one which has a sensor light that automatically turns on and off.

4 Raised threshold

Mark threshold with coloured paint.

5 Unsafe steps - too steep, too uneven, cracked

Repair broken or cracked steps. Consider installing a ramp.

6 Lack of a wheelchair ramp

Use a wheelchair ramp. If these sizings are unsuitable, have a ramp constructed that will allow wheelchair access in and out of the home.

7 Unsteady or unsuitable railings

Check railings to ensure they will support your weight. Repair if they are loose or broken.

8 Uneven or cracked path up to door

Have any uneven or cracked path repaired. In the short-term avoid these areas if possible when walking to and from the home.

9 Objects Underfoot/ Clutter

Eliminate clutter on paths by removing and/or organizing items. Example: Bucket, hose, flower pots, recycling.

10 Slippery surface after rainfall

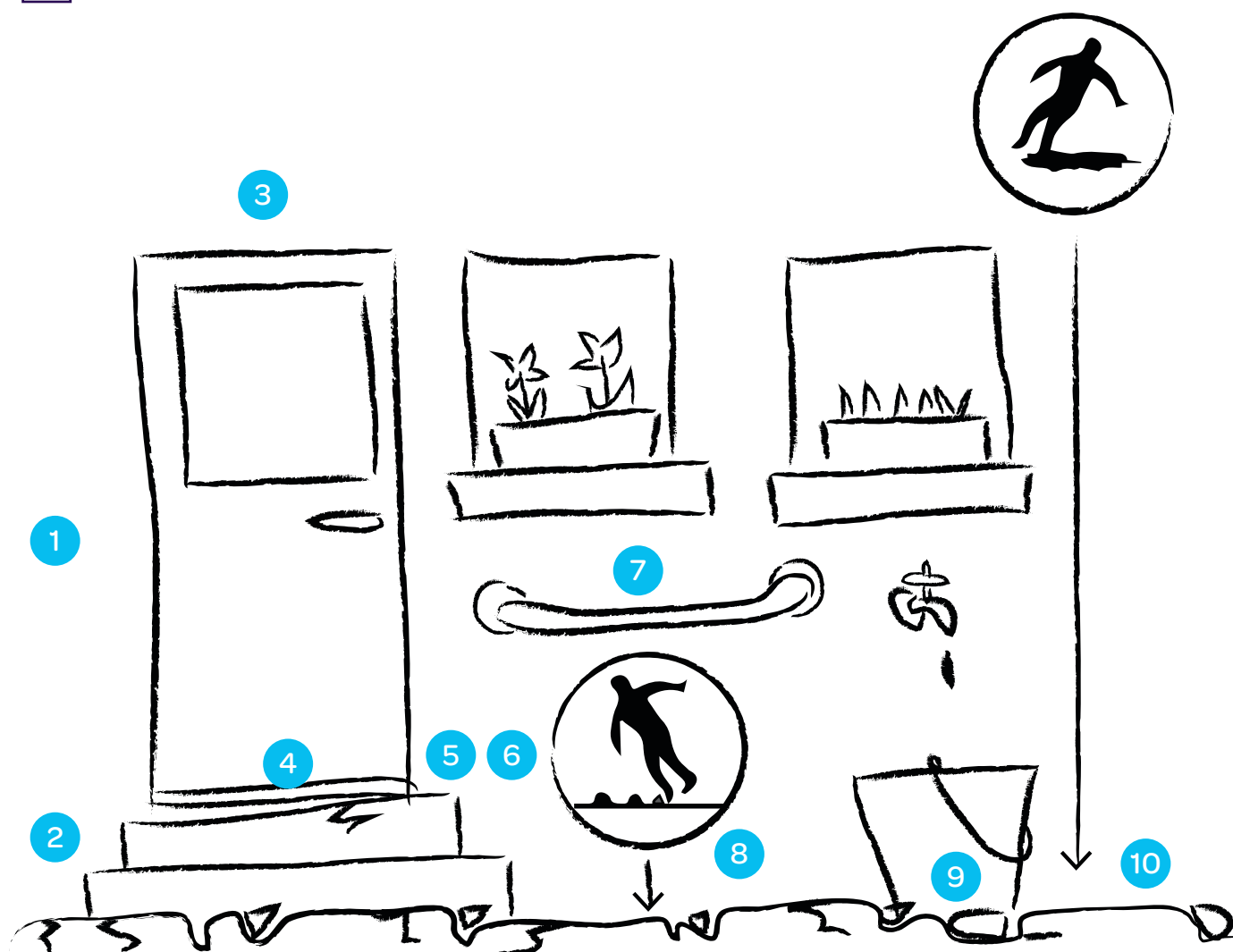
Check steps and pathways to see how slippery they become when wet. Take action with non-slip driveway paint.



✓ Checklist:

- ☐ Lack of grabrails
- ☐ Unmarked step or raised area
- ☐ Lack of exterior lighting
- ☐ Raised threshold
- ☐ Unsafe steps, too steep, uneven, cracked
- ☐ Lack of a wheelchair ramp
- ☐ Unsteady or unsuitable railings
- ☐ Uneven or cracked path up to door
- ☐ Slippery surface after rainfall

Other Hazards?



Hall

- 1 Light switch for ceiling light near entrance door

Ensure there is a light switch just inside the door to illuminate the hall before entering.

- 2 Slippery floor surface

Make sure floor surfaces are dry. If you have a carpet, make sure that the patterns are not too busy. If necessary have the carpet stretched or removed to eliminate wrinkles or bumps. Add a carpet runner to slippery halls and most importantly secure this to the floor.

- 3 Dark or poor lighting

Increase the wattage of your bulbs. Add an additional wall light or table lamp to this area if necessary. Consider a timer for table lamps.

- 4 Cluttered area

Eliminate clutter on floors by removing and/or organizing items. Example: shoe tray, hooks for umbrella.



✓ Checklist:

- ☐ Light switch for ceiling light near entrance door
- ☐ Slippery floor surface
- ☐ Dark or poor lighting
- ☐ Cluttered area

Other Hazards?



Kitchen

1 Cabinets too high/too low

Move items you use regularly to the bottom shelves of your cabinets. Here they will be easily reached. Bending down to get items from the back of low cabinets can be painful and also increases your risk of a fall when you get back up. Add hooks to the wall for pots and pans you use frequently.

2 Not enough counter space

Keep the kitchen counter clear of clutter. Move your kitchen table closer to the counter for additional work space. Or investigate a free-standing butchers block for additional work space.

3 Poor lighting

Increase the wattage of your bulbs. Add additional under counter lighting. Add additional overhead lighting.

4 Using a chair or stool to reach things

Move everyday items to lower shelves. Also, replace the stool with a sturdy step ladder.

5 Slippery floor

Wipe spills immediately. Do not walk on a wet floor. Wear comfortable shoes that fit well or socks with a non-skid sole. Consider changing your flooring surface to one that is less slippery.

6 Under counter appliances too low

If you have to bend down every time you need something from the fridge, consider getting a freestanding larger fridge. Similarly bending down to the oven poses burn risks and fall risks. Consider getting the oven put in at eye level.

7 Controls on hob difficult to use

To avoid the risk of fire and the inconvenience of burnt dinners, put handles on your hob controls.

8 Pet underfoot when preparing meals

Remove the pet from the kitchen while cooking and add a pet gate to the entry ways of the kitchen. Put the pet outside or in a crate.

9 Taps at sink area difficult to use

If you find your taps are difficult to use, consider placing handles on them.

10 Cluttered floor area

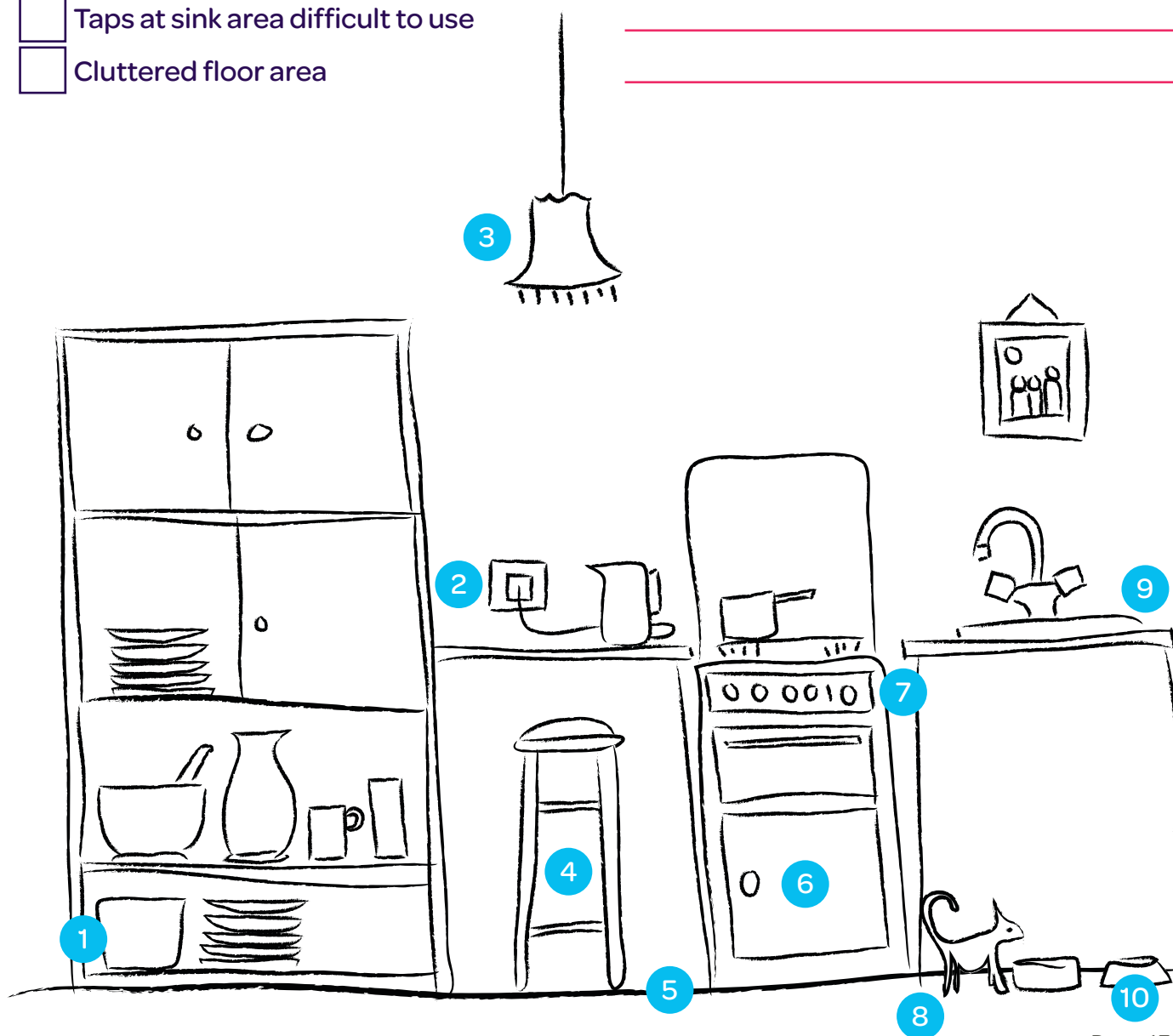
Eliminate clutter or excess furniture (extra kitchen chairs, etc.) to add space. Remove a leaf from the table and push it closer to the wall.



✓ Checklist:

- ☐ Cabinets too high/too low
- ☐ Not enough counter space
- ☐ Poor lighting
- ☐ Using a chair or stool to reach things
- ☐ Slippery floor
- ☐ Under counter appliances too low
- ☐ Controls on hob difficult to use
- ☐ Pet underfoot when preparing meals
- ☐ Taps at sink area difficult to use
- ☐ Cluttered floor area

Other Hazards?



Dining room/dining area

1 Cluttered area

Clear all clutter from this area, as when carrying dishes of food to the table you will have decreased visibility and your hands full.

2 Poor lighting

Increase the wattage of your bulbs. Add additional overhead or occasional lighting.

3 Rugs

Remove a rug altogether or use doublesided rug tape or a rug pad to secure the rug to the floor. Also it is a good idea to avoid carpets with confusing patterns.

4 Unsuitable furniture

Is your table too big? Consider taking a leaf out of it to give you more floor space. This also saves you having to reach across a long table for an item. Have you too many chairs in the room? Again, consider removing some and placing against the wall to give you greater floor space. Have you a chair with armrests to allow you to lower yourself onto it and rise out of it again?

5 Slippery floor

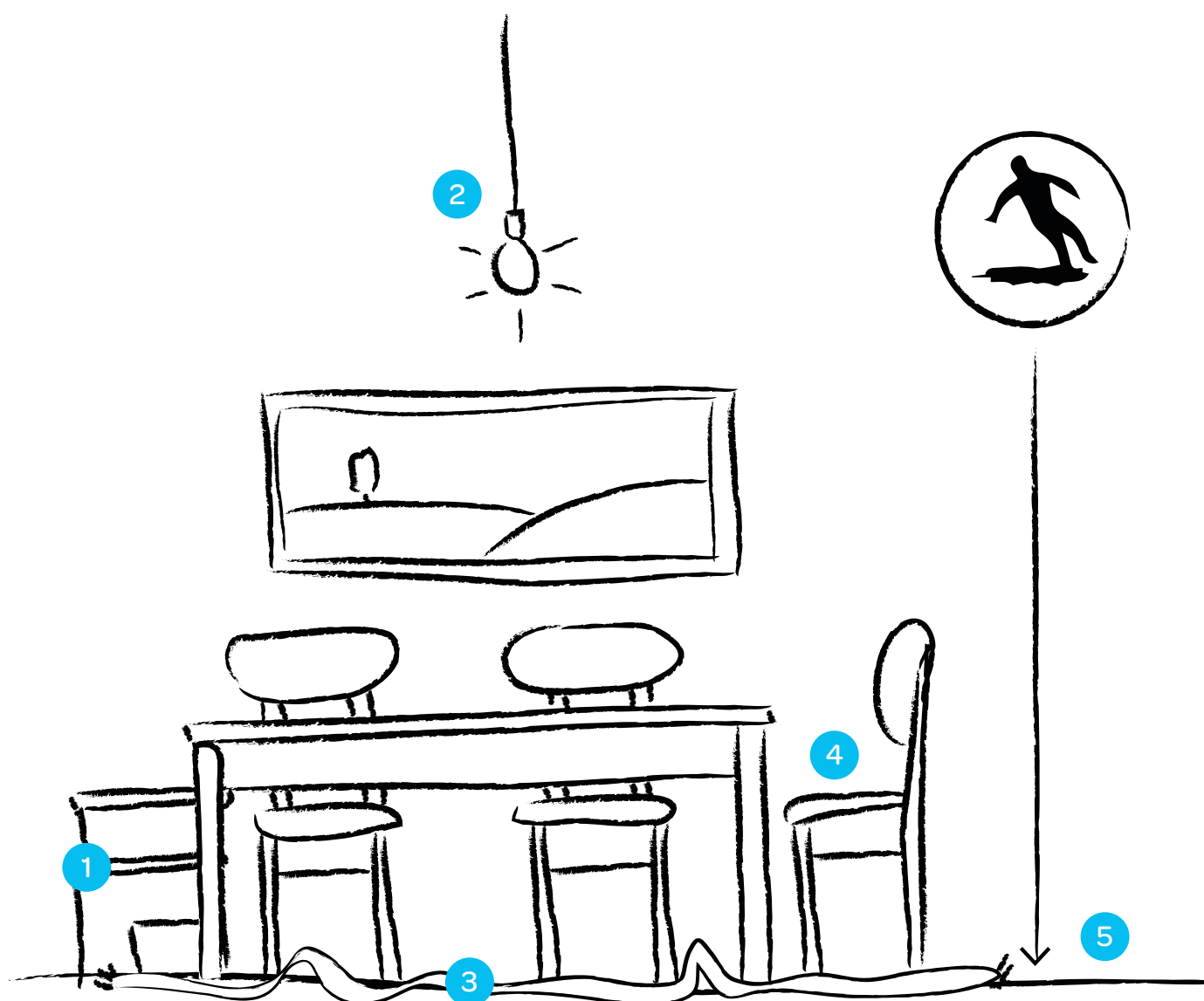
Wipe spills immediately. Do not walk on a wet floor. Wear comfortable shoes that fit well or socks with a non-skid sole. Consider changing your flooring surface to one that is less slippery.



✓ Checklist:

- ☐ Cluttered area
- ☐ Poor lighting
- ☐ Rugs
- ☐ Unsuitable furniture
- ☐ Slippery floor

Other Hazards?



Sitting room

1 Difficult to access light switch

Rearrange furnishings to allow quick access to wall switch or lamps. Investigate “clapper” light control lamps, which come on when you clap your hands. There are other remote control switching options for operating the lights.

2 Poor lighting

Increase the wattage of your bulbs. Add an additional wall light or table lamp to this area if necessary. Consider a timer for table lamps.

3 Unsuitable furniture

Repair or replace any broken or unstable furniture. Find a good home for items of furniture that are too big for your room or have edges that you could hit against or fall against. This is a good time to declutter and reassess your needs.

4 Cluttered area

Go through your room with a critical eye. Eliminate clutter on floor surfaces by placing items on shelves. Eliminate clutter on shelves and display units by donating or throwing away the items you no longer use. Cluttered shelves increase the risk of an item falling on top of you. Keep items you use regularly within easy reach so you don't have to stretch to reach them.

5 Inadequate floor space

Remove clutter or excess furniture that prevents you from moving around the room easily. Some items may be rearranged, but you may want to donate or throw out other items you don't really need or use.

6 Unsuitable chair

If your favourite chair is too low, add a furniture leg riser to raise the height. A chair that is too high or without arms should not be used either, as it will not provide you with sufficient stability to get in and out of the chair.

7 Rugs

Remove a rug altogether or use doublesided rug tape or a rug pad to secure the rug to the floor. Also it is a good idea to avoid carpets with confusing patterns.

8 Electrical cords on floor

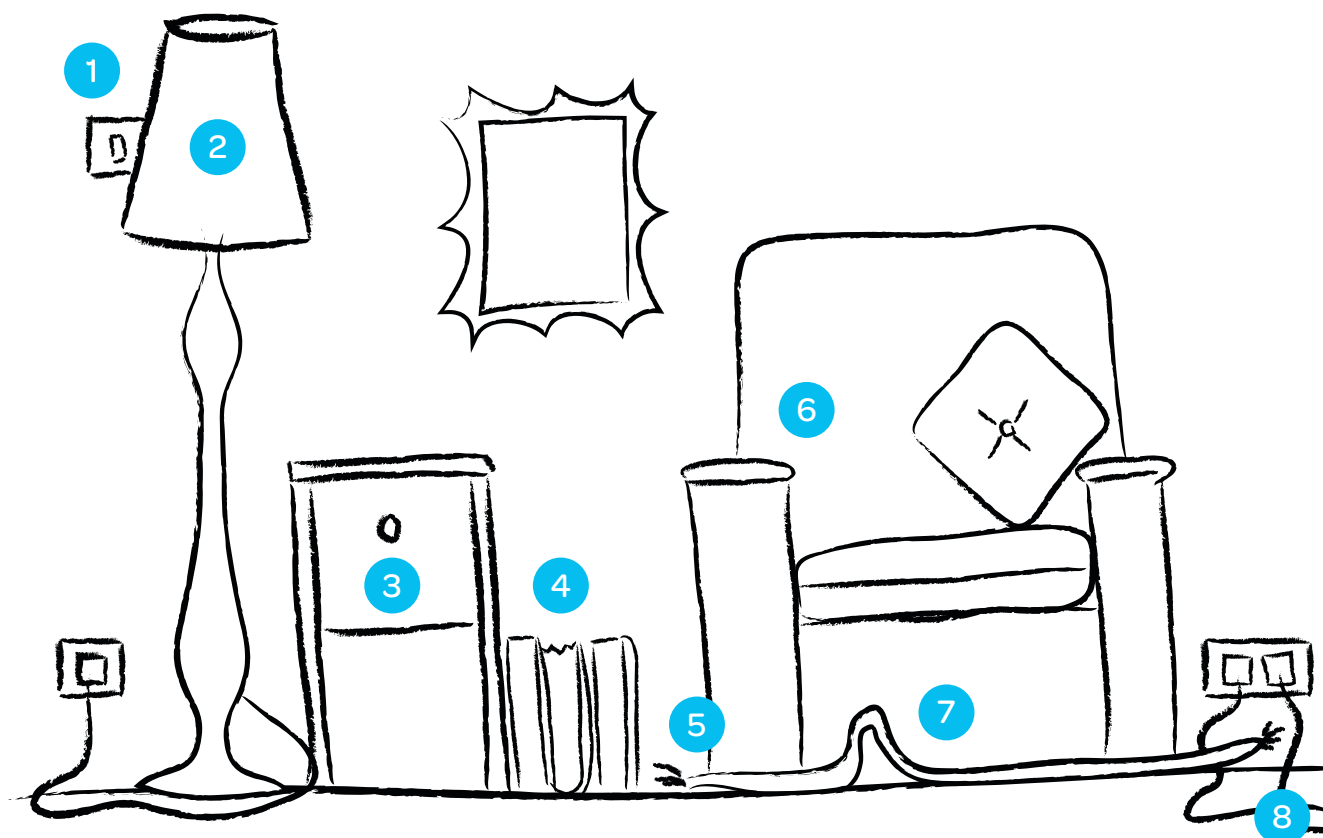
Run your cords behind furnishings. Use extension cords to accomplish this. Rearrange items that must be plugged in to areas near an outlet.



✓ Checklist:

- ☐ Difficult to access light switch
- ☐ Poor lighting
- ☐ Unsuitable furniture
- ☐ Cluttered area
- ☐ Inadequate floor space
- ☐ Unsuitable chair
- ☐ Rugs
- ☐ Electrical cords on floor

Other Hazards?



Utility room

1 Clutter

Eliminate clutter on floors by removing and/or organizing items. Brushes, mops etc should be tidied away in their own press. Shoes can be organised on shoe stands. Washing powder and household cleaners should be clearly labelled and stored on a shelving unit.

2 Poor lighting

Increase the wattage of your bulbs. Add additional overhead or wall lighting if necessary.

3 No grab rails

Consider adding a grab rail at the washing machine to help you get up after filling or emptying the machine.

4 Laundry basket too large

Consider downsizing to a smaller laundry basket. It will be easier to carry, especially when full of wet clothes.

5 Slippery floor

Wipe spills immediately. Do not walk on a wet floor. Wear comfortable shoes/ slippers that fit well or socks with a nonskid sole. Consider changing your flooring surface to one that is less slippery.



✓ Checklist:

- ☐ Clutter
- ☐ Poor lighting
- ☐ No grab rails
- ☐ Too large laundry basket
- ☐ Slippery floor

Other Hazards?



WC

1 Slippery floor

Wipe spills immediately. Do not walk on a wet floor. Wear comfortable slippers that fit well or socks with a non-skid sole. Consider changing your flooring surface to one that is less slippery.

2 Poor lighting

Increase the wattage of your bulbs.

3 Difficult to use taps

If you find your taps are difficult to use, consider placing handles on them.

4 No grab bars near the toilet

Add a grab bar on the level next to the toilet or use a toilet seat with safety grab bars attached.

5 Toilet is too low

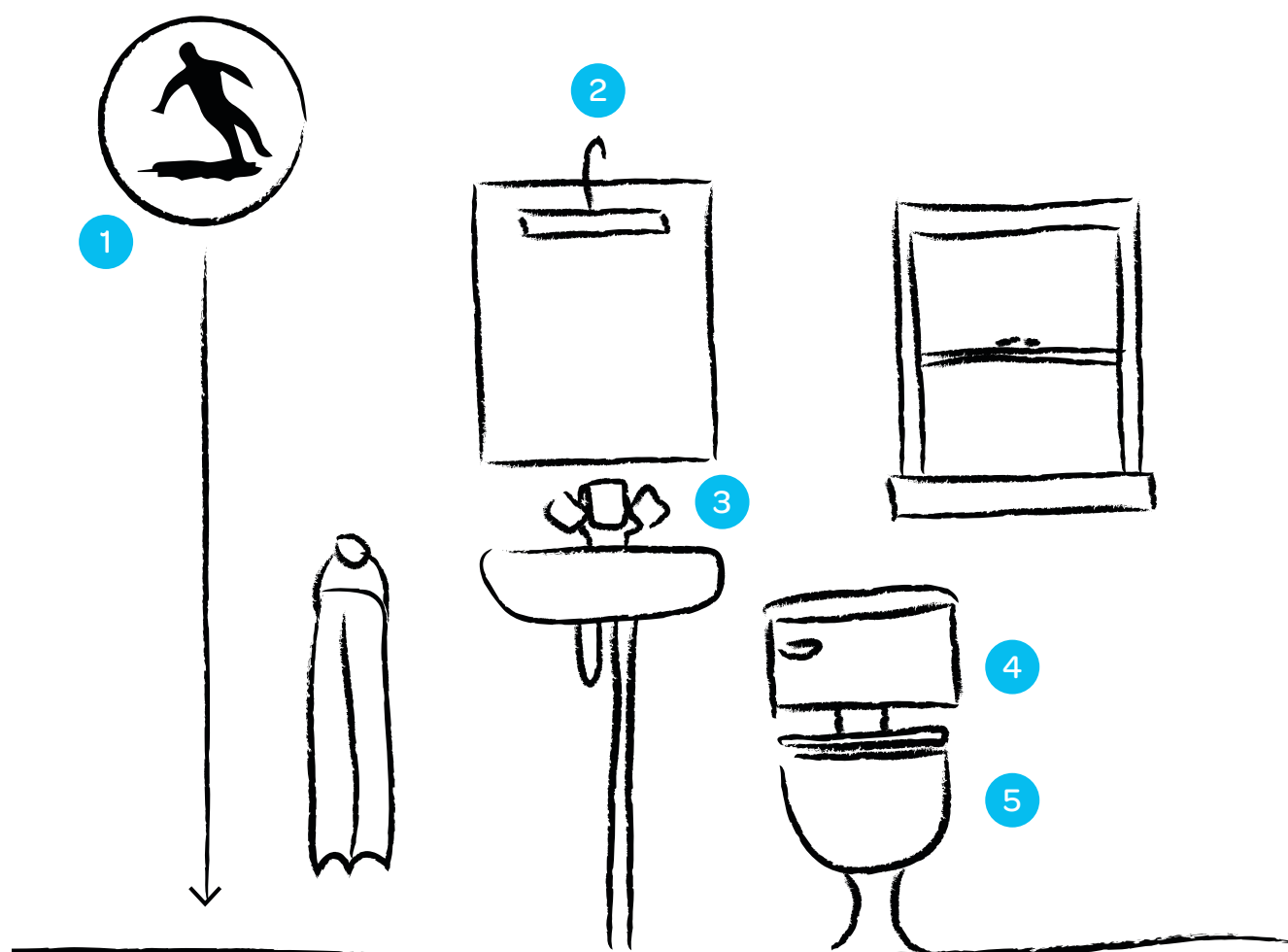
Add a raised toilet seat for seats that are too low.



✓ Checklist:

- ☐ Slippery floor
- ☐ Poor lighting
- ☐ Difficult to use taps
- ☐ No grab bars near the toilet
- ☐ Toilet is too low

Other Hazards?



Landing and stairs

1 Wooden stairs slippery

Add adhesive stair treads or carpet runner.

2 Thin edge on corner steps

Many staircases with a right angle turn have about 3 steps with a thin edge close to the banisters. Walk close to the wall going up and down stairs.

3 Poor lighting

Increase the wattage of your bulbs. Add additional overhead or wall lighting if necessary. Place a lightswitch at both top and bottom of the stairs.

4 Carpet frayed, damaged or busy pattern

Have carpet stretched or removed to eliminate wrinkles or bumps. Replace frayed or threadworn carpets or runners.

5 Lack of hand railings on both sides

Add at least one railing down the entire length of the wall, ideally there should be a secure hand rail on each side.

6 Steps too steep

Use railings for stability. Walk slowly up and down stairs with lights on. Have others carry heavy or large items up or down the stairs. Reduce daily use of stairs to reduce risk of falls.

7 Clutter

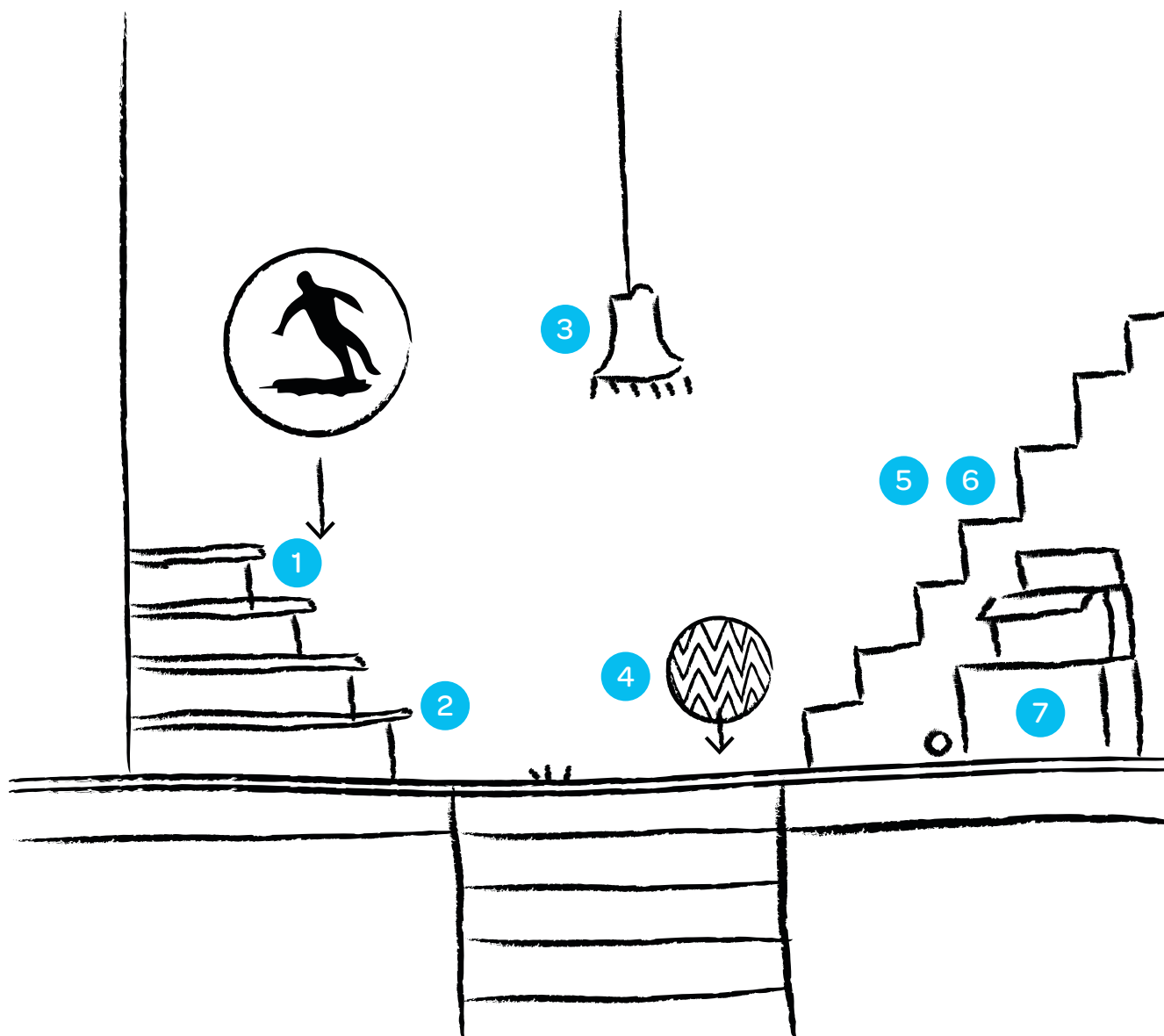
Eliminate clutter on floors by removing and/or organizing items at the top and the bottom of the stairs.



✓ Checklist:

- ☐ Wooden stairs slippery
- ☐ Thin edge on corner steps
- ☐ Poor lighting
- ☐ Carpet frayed, damaged or busy pattern
- ☐ Lack of hand railings on both sides
- ☐ Steps too steep
- ☐ Clutter

Other Hazards?



Bedroom

1 No chair

Consider purchasing a sturdy chair with high back and arms for support while dressing.

2 Unsafe carpet, mat on floor

Have carpet stretched or removed to eliminate wrinkles or bumps. Remove rugs or use double-sided rug tape or a rug pad to secure the rug to floor.

3 No nightlight

Put at least one nightlight in the bedroom to illuminate the room at night. Add additional nightlights along the hall and especially along the path to the bathroom. Also add one nightlight in the bathroom.

4 Problems with the bed - too high, too low, no support

Bed too low - your knees are above your hips when sitting on the edge of the bed. Use bed risers under bed legs to raise height. Too high - your legs do not touch the floor when sitting at the edge of the bed. Remove bed frame or use a lower profile mattress or box spring. Purchase a half bedrail or a bed cane that can slide between mattress and box spring.

5 Old style electric blanket with no timer

Throw out any old style electric blanket, and replace with the new style blanket with a timer switch.

6 Bedside table cluttered and hard to reach lamp

Arrangements that cause difficulty in reaching commonly used items such as a bedside lamp, medications, glasses, book, etc at night. Place these items on your bedside table. If the table is not big enough, investigate a rolling cart.

7 No telephone beside the bed

Place a cordless phone or cell phone next to your bed at night or during naps. Use a remote control for TV.

8 No personal alarm beside the bed

Investigate a personal/panic alarm for beside the bed. Note to self - Check health board for info on this.

9 Clutter on the floor

Go through your room with a critical eye. Eliminate clutter on floor surfaces by placing items in wardrobe. Eliminate clutter on shelves and wardrobes by donating or throwing away the items you no longer use. Keep items you wear regularly within easy reach so you don't have to stretch to reach them.

10 Electrical cords on floor

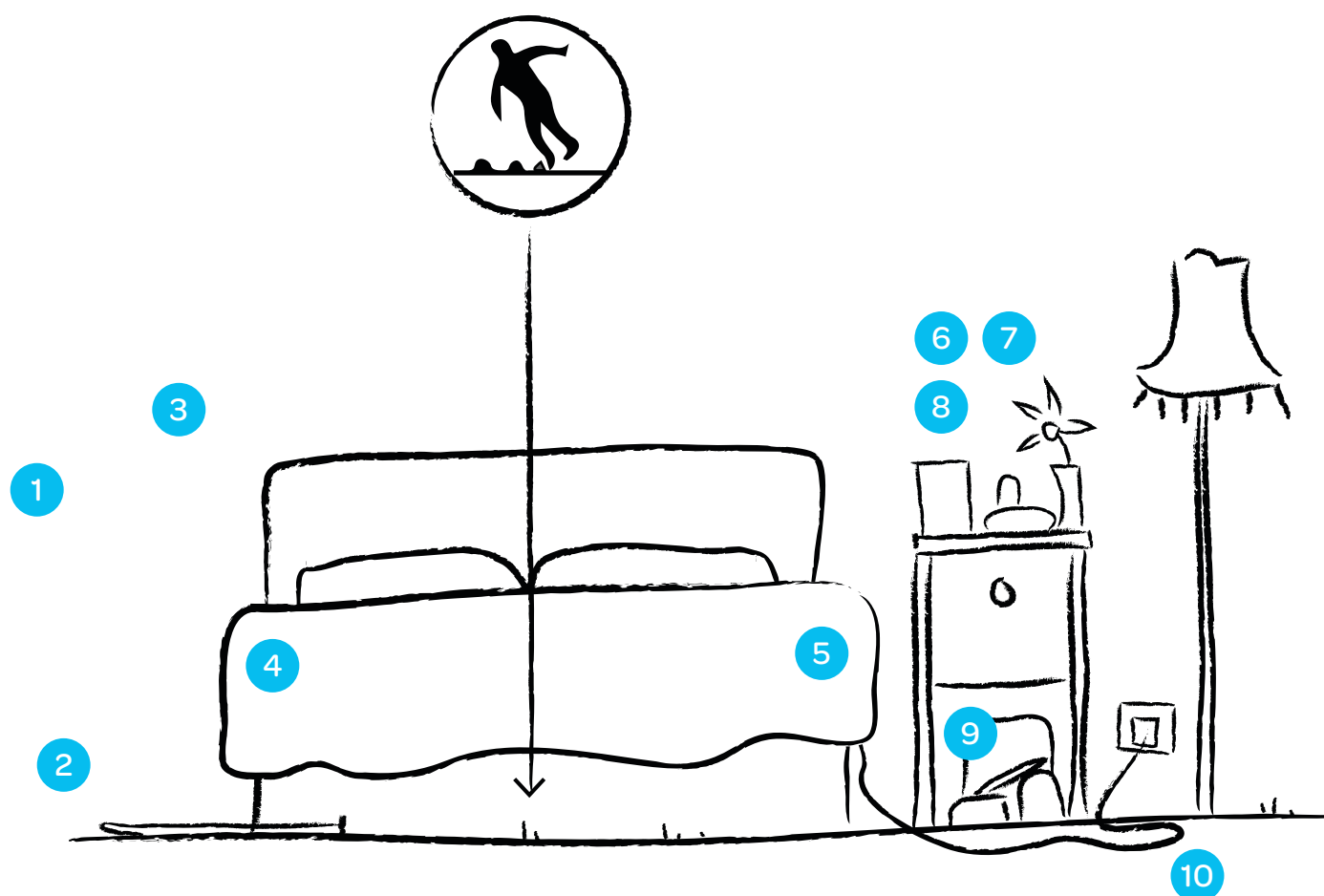
Run your cords behind furnishings. Use extension cords to accomplish this. Rearrange items that must be plugged in to areas near an outlet.



✓ Checklist:

- ☐ No chair
- ☐ Unsafe carpet, mat on floor
- ☐ No nightlight
- ☐ Problems with the bed - too high, too low, no support
- ☐ Old style electric blanket with no timer
- ☐ Bedside table cluttered and hard to reach lamp
- ☐ No telephone beside the bed
- ☐ No personal alarm beside the bed
- ☐ Clutter on the floor
- ☐ Electrical cords on floor

Other Hazards?



En-suite

1 Slippery floor

Wipe spills immediately. Do not walk on a wet floor. Wear comfortable slippers that fit well or socks with a non-skid sole. Consider changing your flooring surface to one that is less slippery.

2 Difficult to use taps

If you find your taps are difficult to use, consider placing handles on them.

3 Unsafe floor mats/toilet mats

Use a floor mat/toilet mat with a non-skid bottom. Consider getting rid of the toilet mat and storing the floor mat on a shelf when not needed.

4 Poor lighting and no nightlight

Increase the wattage of your bulbs. Place at least one nightlight in the en-suite.

5 Toilet is too low

Add a raised toilet seat for seats that are too low.

6 No grab bars near the toilet

Add a grab bar on the level next to the toilet or use a toilet seat with safety grab bars attached.

7 Clutter

Remove clutter from all floor areas. Inexpensive plastic cabinets or rolling units can be purchased to store shampoos, gels, cosmetics etc.

8 No grab bars in the shower

Add grab bars to the wall near the shower and on the wall where the shower controls are.

9 Lack of chair in the shower area

Add a bath chair along with grab bars to the bath or shower area.



✓ Checklist:

- ☐ Slippery floor
- ☐ Difficult to use taps
- ☐ Unsafe floor mats/toilet mats
- ☐ Poor lighting and no nightlight
- ☐ Toilet is too low
- ☐ No grab bars near the toilet
- ☐ Clutter
- ☐ No grab bars in the shower
- ☐ Lack of chair in the shower area

Other Hazards?



Bathroom

1 No grab bars near the toilet

Add a grab bar on the level next to the toilet or use a toilet seat with safety grab bars attached.

2 Toilet is too low

Add a raised toilet seat for seats that are too low.

3 Poor lighting and no nightlight

Increase the wattage of your bulbs. Place at least one nightlight in the bathroom.

4 Unsafe bath mats/toilet mats

Use a bath mat/toilet mat with a non-skid bottom. Consider getting rid of the toilet mat and storing the bath mat on a shelf when not needed.

5 Bath tub surface is slippery

Add a rubber bath mat or adhesive nonskid decals to the bottom of the tub.

6 No grab bars in the bath

Add a bath grab bar on the wall or a clamp-on grab bar to the bath. For information on these devices, see page ---, item ---.

7 Bath that is too high to get into

Add a bath transfer bench to slide into the bath area. A bath transfer bench is helpful if you have difficulty stepping into the bath area, because you can sit and slide over into the bath.

8 Difficult to use taps

If you find your taps are difficult to use, consider placing handles on them.

9 Clutter

Go through the room with a critical eye. Eliminate clutter by placing items on shelves or in drawers and cupboards.

10 Slippery floor

Wipe spills immediately. Do not walk on a wet floor. Wear comfortable slippers that fit well or socks with a non-skid sole. Consider changing your flooring surface to one that is less slippery.

11 No grab bars in the shower

Add grab bars to the wall near the shower and on the wall where the shower controls are.

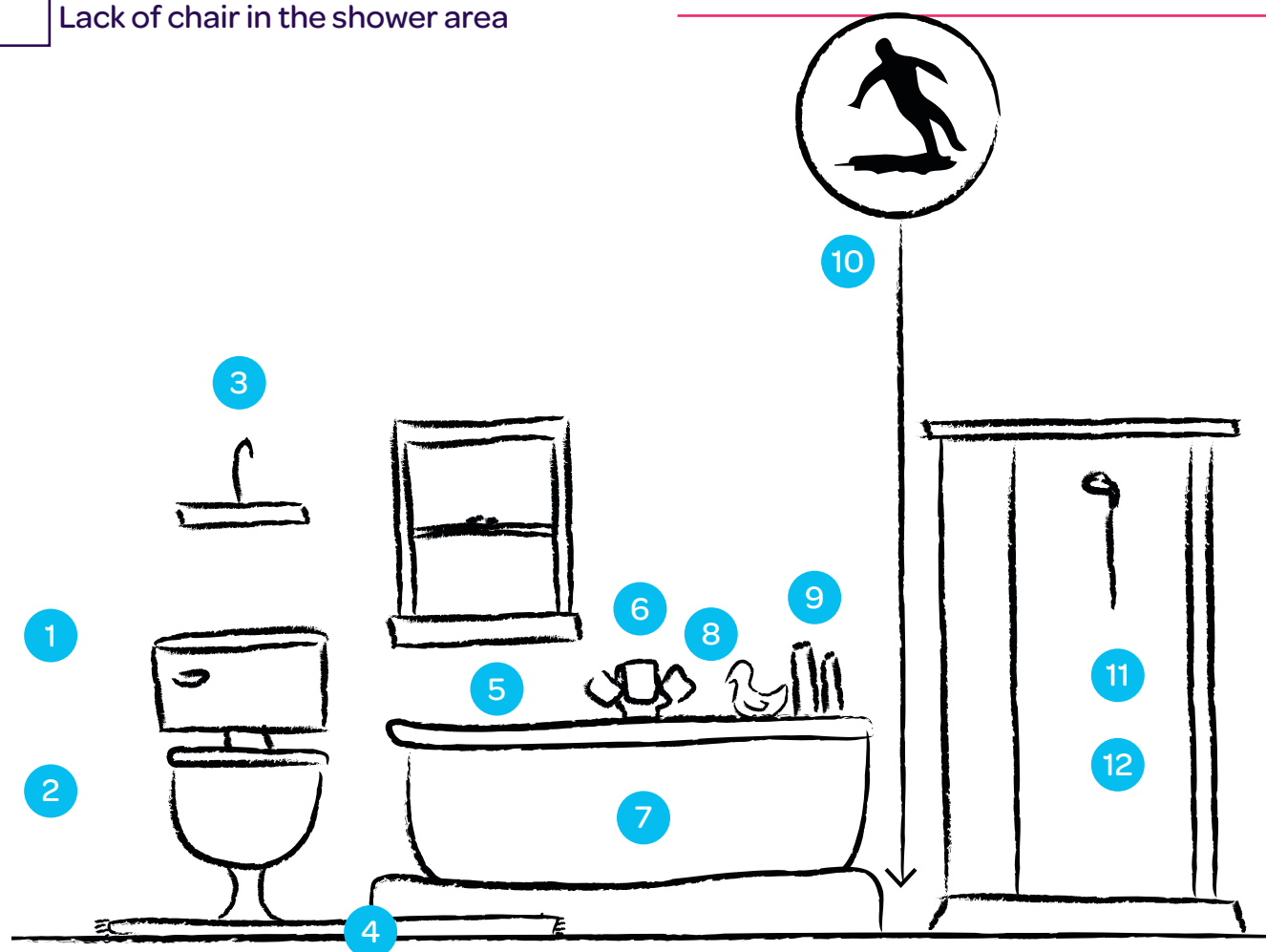
12 Lack of chair in the shower area

Add a bath chair along with grab bars to the bath or shower area.

✓ Checklist:

- ☐ No grab bars near the toilet
- ☐ Toilet is too low
- ☐ Poor lighting and no nightlight
- ☐ Unsafe bath mats/toilet mats
- ☐ Bath tub surface is slippery
- ☐ No grab bars in the bath
- ☐ Bath that is too high to get into
- ☐ Difficult to use taps
- ☐ Clutter
- ☐ Slippery floor
- ☐ No grab bars in the shower
- ☐ Lack of chair in the shower area

Other Hazards?



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FOLLOW UP - ACTION PLAN

1. Identify the number of hazards
2. Contact Garvan at Lynch's Pharmacy to make an appointment to discuss the hazards identified.
3. We provide assisted living devices and other helpful products, specific to the hazards identified, in order to make your home safer.



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