MCM PRIVATE CARE

Is Your Parent's Home Safe?

A Fall Prevention Checklist for Montgomery County Families

By Andrea Kohn, CRNP — Founder, MCM Private Care

If you've started worrying about your parent living alone — noticing things you didn't notice before, calling more often just to make sure they're okay — you're not imagining it. Falls are the leading cause of injury for adults over 65, and most of them happen at home. This checklist walks you through every room so you can see what your parent's home looks like through fresh eyes.

BATHROOM

- [ ] Grab bars installed next to the toilet and inside the shower or tub
- [ ] Non-slip mat or adhesive strips on the shower/tub floor
- [ ] Shower bench or chair available (even if they say they don't need it)
- [ ] Bright lighting — no dim bulbs or burned-out fixtures
- [ ] Nightlight between the bedroom and bathroom
- [ ] Medications stored where they won't be confused (not loose on the counter)

BEDROOM

- [ ] Bed is the right height — they can sit on the edge with feet flat on the floor
- [ ] Nightlight or touch-lamp within arm's reach from the bed
- [ ] Clear, uncluttered path from the bed to the bathroom
- [ ] Phone or medical alert device within reach from the bed
- [ ] No loose rugs or cords between the bed and the door
- [ ] Sturdy furniture — nothing that slides when leaned on

KITCHEN

- [ ] Frequently used dishes, glasses, and food are between waist and shoulder height
- [ ] Step stool is sturdy with a handrail (or better — nothing requires a step stool)
- [ ] No loose rugs or mats in front of the sink or stove
- [ ] Stove has auto-shutoff or a timer they actually use
- [ ] Spills get wiped up right away (check the floor — is it sticky or damp?)
- [ ] Fire extinguisher accessible and not expired

STAIRS & HALLWAYS

- [ ] Handrails on both sides of every staircase (not just one side)
- [ ] Handrails are secure — grab and pull hard, they shouldn't move
- [ ] Bright, even lighting at the top and bottom of every staircase
- [ ] Nothing stored on the stairs — no shoes, books, laundry baskets
- [ ] Contrast tape or paint on the edge of each step (especially the top and bottom)
- [ ] Hallway clear enough to walk through without turning sideways

LIVING AREAS

- [ ] Furniture is stable — no wobbly chairs or side tables that tip
- [ ] Electrical cords are tucked against walls, not crossing walkways
- [ ] Carpet edges are flat and secured (no curling corners or bumps)
- [ ] Adequate lighting in every area — no dark corners between rooms
- [ ] TV remotes, phone, and glasses are in consistent, reachable spots
- [ ] If they use a walker or cane, there's room to move between furniture

ENTRANCE & OUTSIDE

- [ ] Porch light and walkway lighting — bright enough to see at dusk
- [ ] Handrail on both sides of exterior steps
- [ ] Walkway is even — no cracked concrete, loose bricks, or tree roots
- [ ] Doormat is flat and secured (not bunched or curling at the edges)
- [ ] A trusted neighbor or family member has a key for emergencies
- [ ] House number is visible from the street (for EMS — this matters)

Count the boxes you left unchecked. →

If You Left 5 or More Boxes Unchecked, Your Parent May Be at Higher Risk.

The checklist catches what you can see. These warning signs catch what your parent may not be telling you:

- **Recent falls or near-falls** — they may downplay it. Ask directly: "Have you tripped, slipped, or lost your balance recently?"
- **Gripping furniture when walking** — watch them move from room to room. Are they reaching for walls, counters, chair backs?
- **Avoiding stairs or certain rooms** — if they've stopped going to the basement or upstairs bedroom, there's usually a reason.
- **Bruises they can't explain** — on forearms, shins, or hips especially.
- **Less activity than usual** — canceling outings, skipping walks, spending more time in one chair.
- **Hesitant or shuffling gait** — feet barely leaving the floor, shorter steps, visible uncertainty.

Most families notice these signs gradually. You might write it off as "just getting older." Sometimes it is. But a fall can change everything overnight — a broken hip, a hospital stay, a move to assisted living that didn't have to happen.

The good news: most of the items in this checklist can be fixed in a weekend.

Three Steps to Take This Week

STEP 1: WALK THROUGH THIS CHECKLIST IN PERSON

Print this out and bring it on your next visit. Walk every room with your parent — or walk it yourself while they're in the living room. Some things you'll only notice when you're looking for them.

STEP 2: FIX THE QUICK WINS

Most of the highest-impact changes cost under $50 and take less than an hour:

Grab bars: $15–$40 each. Install next to the toilet and in the shower first.

Non-slip mats: $10–$20. Bathtub and kitchen sink.

Nightlights: $5–$15. Bedroom-to-bathroom path and top/bottom of stairs.

Remove loose rugs. This one is free and prevents more falls than anything else on this list.

Montgomery County resources: - Montgomery County Aging & Disability Services: 240-777-3000 (can connect you with home modification programs) - Many local handyman services in Potomac, Bethesda, Rockville, and Silver Spring will install grab bars and handrails affordably — ask for senior home safety experience specifically

STEP 3: IF YOU'RE CONCERNED, GET A PROFESSIONAL ASSESSMENT

If your parent has already fallen — or if you walked through this checklist and felt that knot in your stomach — it may be time for a professional home safety evaluation.

MCM's nurse practitioner–led team conducts home safety assessments for families. They'll walk the home with clinical eyes, evaluate your parent's mobility and medications, and help you understand what level of support would actually keep them safe — whether that's a few simple modifications or something more.

There's no obligation. It's a conversation, not a sales pitch.

About MCM Private Care

MCM Private Care was founded by Andrea Kohn, CRNP — a nurse practitioner who started this company because she saw too many families get hurt by the broken home care model. Rotating strangers, no clinical oversight, no one watching the things that matter.

MCM is different. Every care plan has nurse practitioner–led clinical oversight. Caregivers are hand-matched by personality and skill — and the same team stays for years, not weeks. When something changes, a nurse practitioner is already watching.

22 years in Montgomery County. 271 families served.

We're not the biggest agency. We're the one families stay with — and the one they tell their friends about.

Call for a free consultation — no obligation, just guidance.

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MCM Private Care is NP-founded, family-owned, and has served Montgomery County, MD since 2004.
