

Hosting Older Relatives at Home for the Holidays

While preparing for holiday festivities, some thought should be given to preparing your home for your aging parents or relatives. It is common for some to have unique needs, including physical limitations or cognitive losses, which could put them at risk for falls. By making some simple adjustments to your home and routine, you can make the holiday season more safe, comfortable and enjoyable for all.

If possible, review your relative's routines prior to their visit. Do consider any special needs. Do they use a walker, cane or need special equipment? Make every attempt to maintain their regular schedule of meals and sleep. Getting their schedule will guide your planning.

- Obtain information about preferred routines for meals, medications and schedules.
- Try to provide a bedroom on the lower level, ideally with easy access to a bathroom.
- Provide space in the bathroom for medications, personal care items, etc.
- Ensure safe accessibility by removing snow and ice.
- Have adequate lighting, including night-lights in the bedroom, hallways and bathrooms.
- Keep a list of emergency numbers next to the phones, including the number of your parent's regular physician.
- Provide adequate heat but avoid space heaters, if possible.
- Remove all throw rugs around the house and be sure that pathways are clear.
- Make sure your guest knows where things are in the kitchen and that they feel comfortable helping themselves. Many are accustomed to eating small portions several times a day.