

ALS Home Safety

When living with ALS, remaining independent while trying to stay safe can be an ongoing challenge. As the disease progresses, it is important to reevaluate your home safety situation and make adjustments as needed so you can continue to stay safe in your home, enter and exit on your own, and call for help when needed.

The physical and occupational therapists at your ALS clinic, outpatient physical or occupational therapy, or home health agency can help you find ways to be safe and maintain your independence.



Home Safety Evaluation

If you're noticing changes in your mobility and are starting to feel unsafe in your home, schedule an appointment with your neurologist or primary care provider and ask about arranging a visit by a physical or occupational therapist from a home health agency. They will be able to assess the safety and accessibility of your home, and can make recommendations such as using assistive devices, installing ramps, and making other home modifications.

Getting In and Out of Your Home

You must have a way to safely enter and exit your home. Your physical therapist can help you determine the best solution for you. There are a variety of ramps and lifts like threshold ramps, custom ramps, and vertical platform lifts that may help.

Ramps and platform lifts are not covered by insurance. Ask your ALS Arizona if you can borrow what you need from their equipment loan closet. If borrowing is not an option, ask if they have suggestions for getting financial or material assistance from charitable organizations in your community.

Developing a Safety Alert System

In the event of a fall or medical emergency, it is important to have a way to contact people who can help. Keeping your phone on you is one way to have the ability to ask for help. Smart watches can offer similar capabilities and may even be able to detect a fall and automatically notify others. Placing voice-activated smart speakers with digital assistants in rooms where you spend your time is another option.

Or, you can purchase a medical alert system. Unmonitored medical alert systems are not connected to a central response center and will call numbers that are programmed into the system. Monitored medical alert systems will call an agent who can quickly assess your situation and call 911 or your emergency contacts if necessary. Monitored systems offer more features but do incur a monthly charge.

Preventing Falls

It is important to make modifications that will minimize your risk of falling. Most falls happen in the home, so you may need to clear clutter, remove trip hazards like throw rugs, and install grab bars.

If you find that you are tripping or that your walking is unsteady, meet with your physical therapist to discuss mobility support options like ankle foot orthoses (AFOs) or walking aids. Having the right mobility device for your current needs is an important part of fall prevention.

Some other ways to minimize falls around the home include wearing supportive non-slippery shoes or slippers, wearing your AFOs inside, not rushing or multitasking while standing or walking, and not carrying things while walking (especially on stairs).

Bathroom Safety

Bathrooms are often the trickiest room to navigate—and they are also where falls and injuries can and do happen. In addition to following recommendations from your home safety evaluation, work with your physical and/or occupational therapist to create a safe bathroom environment for you. Common bathroom safety recommendations include removing trip hazards like loose bath mats, adding non-skid mats to your tub or shower, installing grab bars in and around your shower and near your toilet, sitting on a shower chair or transfer bench while bathing, and using assistive devices to help you get safely on and off the toilet.

Get Local Support

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