

SPOT the HAZARD

Finding
Balance

Home Safety Checklist



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CONTENTS

About This Checklist... 1	
Foyer 2	
Living Room 4	
Kitchen 6	
Bedroom 8	
Bathroom 10	
Stairs 12	
Laundry Room..... 14	
Action Plan Log..... 16	

A fall can have a significant impact on the lifestyle and independence of an older adult.

Falls are the leading cause of injury among seniors in Alberta. Every year 1 in 3 older Albertans will fall. *Finding Balance* is an education program and public awareness campaign designed to educate and empower older Albertans to stay independent and prevent falls.

The falls prevention program and campaign is developed and led by the Injury Prevention

Centre, School of Public Health, University of Alberta in partnership with seniors groups, health care organizations, and practitioners from across Alberta.

Falls prevention resources including information on medication, vision, footwear, and winter walking can be ordered and/or downloaded at:

www.findingbalancealberta.ca

Phone: 1-780-492-6019

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Welcome to the Spot the Hazard Home Safety Checklist¹. Use this checklist as a guide to spot hazards in your home that may increase your risk of falling. Many of these hazards are often overlooked but important to fix.

In the following pages, the photographs and explanations show falls hazards in typical rooms in a home. These pages can help you to identify possible hazards in your own home. Then you can make a plan to make your home safer. This checklist includes:

- A photograph of a room with possible falls hazards;
- A second photograph of the same room with the falls hazards fixed or removed;
- A corresponding number and explanation for all of the hazards and fixes in the photographs;
- An Action Plan Log (p. 16) where you choose the hazards that apply to rooms in your home and decide what you can do to make your home safer.

Consult a healthcare provider for adaptive equipment that can help you age in place.

If you use a mobility device, make sure it is in good condition and is fitted to you.

Additional resources will be available on the *Finding Balance* website at: www.findingbalancealberta.ca

In general:

- Always use handrails inside and outside your home.
- Pay attention when moving.
- Take your time and avoid rushing.
- When walking or when using the stairs, don't text or read on your phone.
- Always turn on the lights when you enter a room. Use night lights or motion sensitive lights.
- Make sure stairs are in good repair. Fix any loose or uneven steps.
- Watch for uneven surfaces, obstacles, cracks and unmarked stairs and curbs.
- Keep your hands free for balance and to use handrails.
- Be cautious when moving between different flooring surfaces in your home.
- Keep a phone nearby so you don't have to rush to answer a call.

Disclaimer: The information presented is intended as a guide to help reduce the risk of falls in older adults. This guide does not list every potential environmental hazard in the home. The recommendations provided in this document may not be appropriate in all circumstances. The user of this guide should take all reasonable steps to recognize tasks that may require two or more people to complete and/or professional expertise.

¹This tool has been adapted with permission from the Home Safety Self Assessment Tool Version 5 International.

Foyer

Spot the Hazard

Check the box if your foyer has any of these hazards:

- 1. Throw rug or slippery floor.
- 2. Wet floor.
- 3. Clutter. Not enough space to move around.
- 4. Dark or poor lighting.

Ways to fix the hazards are on the next page.



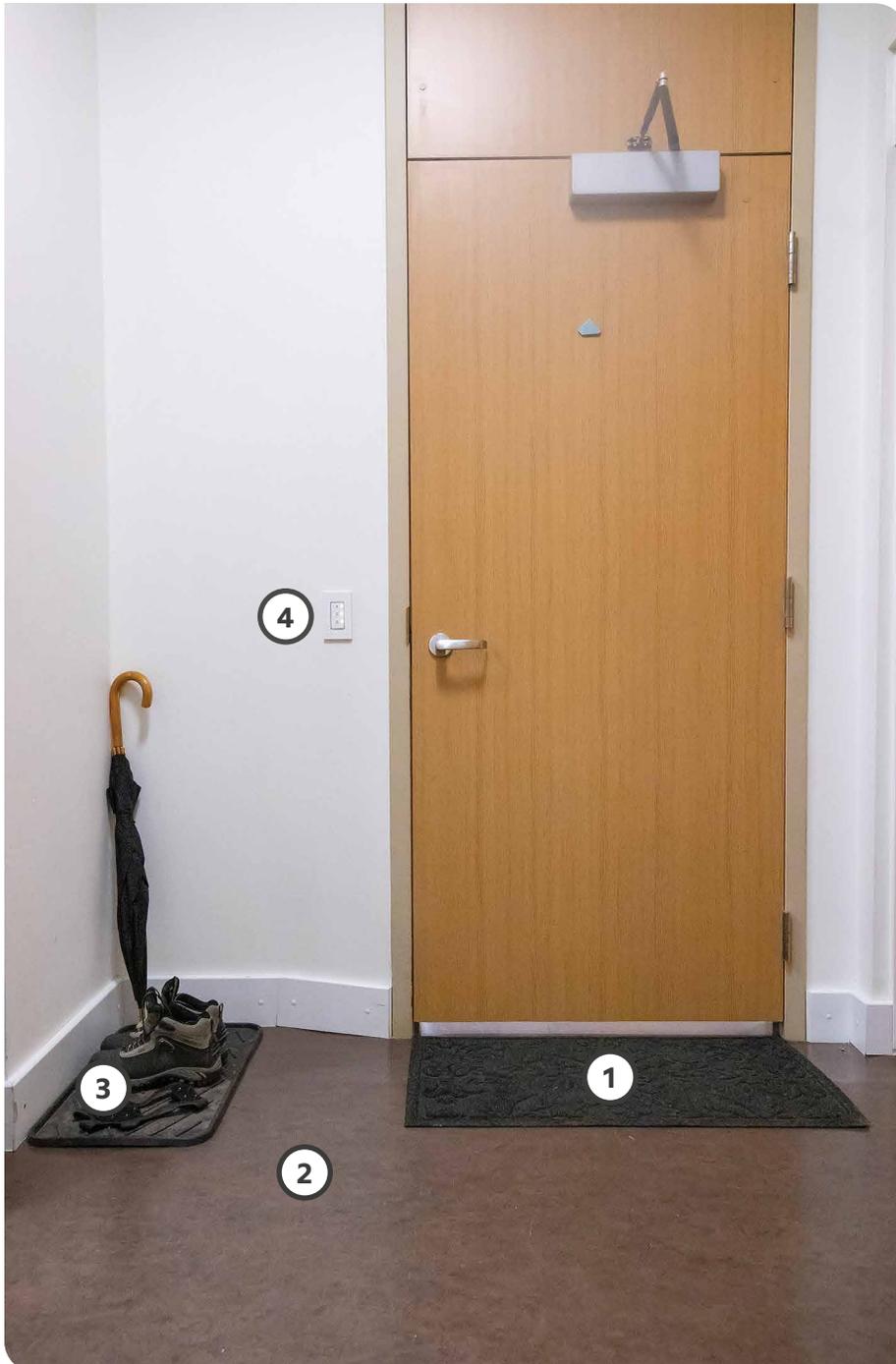
Foyer

Fix the Hazard

Ways to fix the hazards are below:

- 1. Remove throw rug or use a non-slip mat.
- 2. Clean up spills and any water. Make sure floors are dry.
- 3. Keep pathways clear. Remove or organize items on your floor.
- 4. Increase lighting.

Actions you can take:



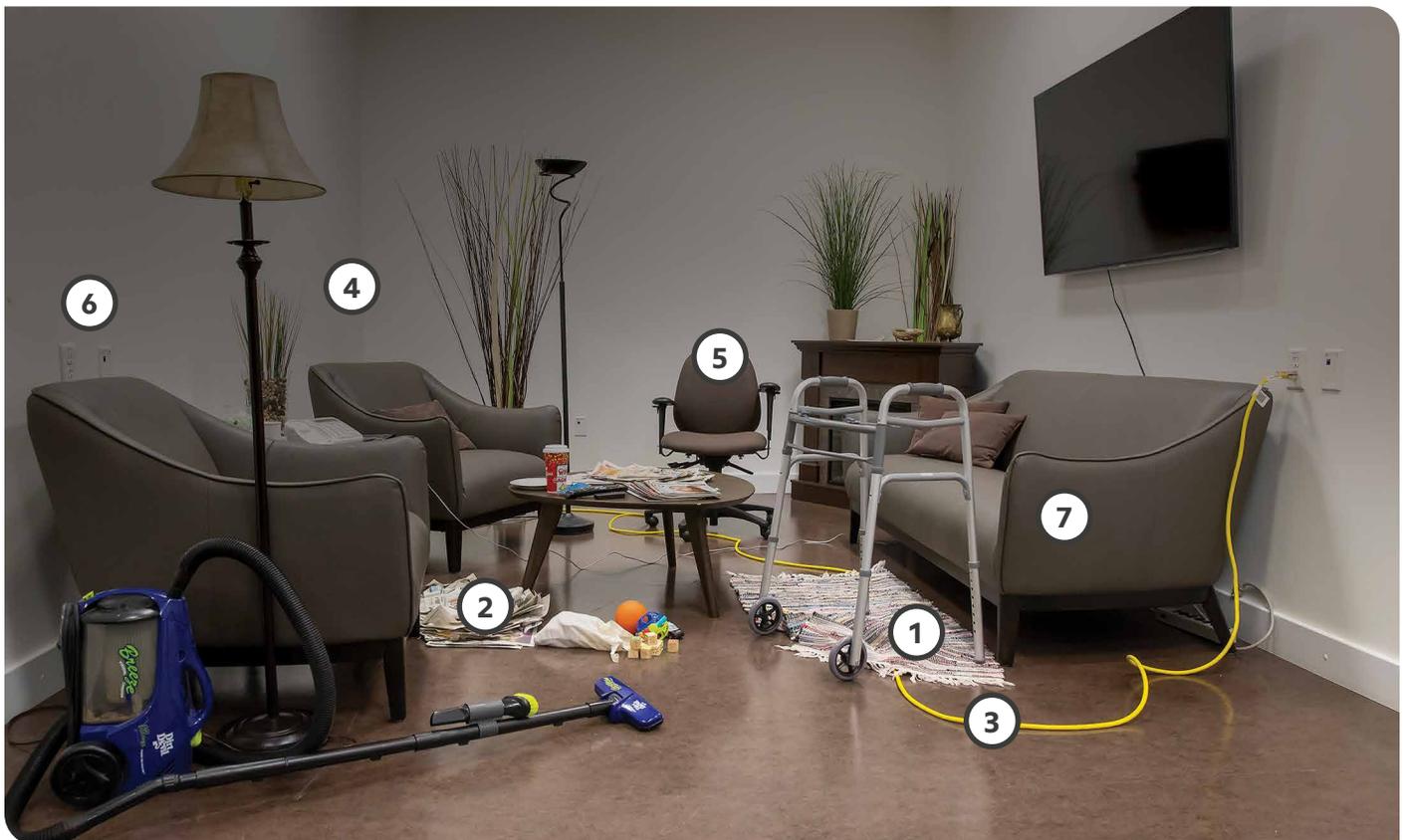
Living Room

Spot the Hazard

Check the box if your living room has any of these hazards:

- 1. Throw rug or slippery floor.
- 2. Clutter. Not enough space to move around.
- 3. Electrical cords across the floor.
- 4. Dark or poor lighting.
- 5. Unstable furniture and/or chair.
- 6. Difficult to access light switches.
- 7. Chair or sofa too high or too low.*

Ways to fix the hazards are on the next page.



*Consult a health care professional for adaptive equipment that can help you age in place.

Living Room

Fix the Hazard

Ways to fix the hazards are below:

- 1. Remove throw rugs or use non-slip mats.
- 2. Keep pathways clear. Remove or organize items on your floor.
- 3. Run electrical cords along walls and behind furniture.
- 4. Increase lighting.
- 5. Repair or replace broken furniture. Do not use a chair with wheels.
- 6. Make sure you can easily reach all light switches and lamps.
- 7. Improve height of furniture if needed.* Use chairs with arm rests.

Actions you can take:



*Consult a health care professional for adaptive equipment that can help you age in place.

Kitchen

Spot the Hazard

Check the box if your kitchen has any of these hazards:

- 1. Throw rugs.
- 2. Water on floor.
- 3. Clutter. Not enough space to move around.
- 4. Unstable stool or chair to reach items.
- 5. Cabinets too high or too low.
- 6. Dark or poor lighting.
- 7. Not enough counter space.
- 8. Pet underfoot when preparing meals.
- 9. Drawers and cabinets left open.

Ways to fix the hazards are on the next page.



Kitchen

Fix the Hazard

Ways to fix the hazards are below:

- 1. Remove throw rug or use a non-slip mat.
- 2. Clean up spills. Make sure floors are dry.
- 3. Keep pathways clear. Remove or organize items on your floor.
- 4. Replace unstable stool with sturdy step ladder with handle. Move items to lower shelves, if possible. Remove rolling chair.
- 5. Move items within reach.
- 6. Increase lighting.
- 7. Make sure counter space is clear of clutter.
- 8. Remove pet from kitchen when cooking.
- 9. Close drawers and cabinets.

Actions you can take:



Bedroom

Spot the Hazard

Check the box if your bedroom has any of these hazards:

- 1. Throw rug or slippery floor.
- 2. Clutter. Not enough space to move around.
- 3. Height of bed is too high or too low.*
- 4. No device to get in and out of bed, if needed.*
- 5. Dark or Poor lighting.
- 6. Important items are out of reach. For example, a walker, phone, eye glasses.
- 7. No telephone near bed.
- 8. Electrical cords across the floor.

Ways to fix the hazards are on the next page.



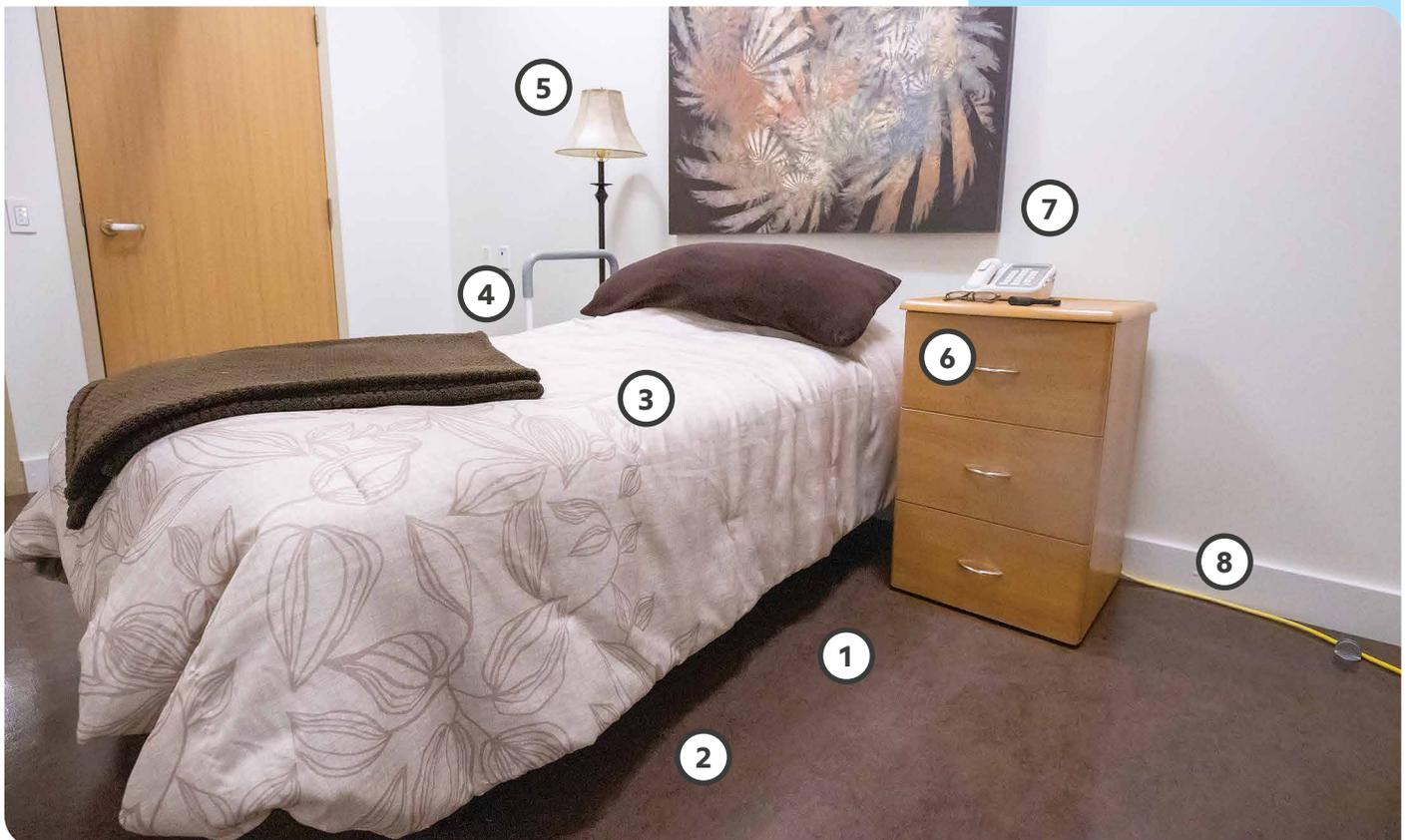
Bedroom

Fix the Hazard

Ways to fix the hazards are below:

- 1. Remove throw rug or use a non-slip mat.
- 2. Keep pathways clear. Remove or organize items on your floor.
- 3. Adjust height of bed.*
- 4. Add a bedrail to help you get in and out of bed.*
- 5. Increase lighting if possible. Add nightlights.
- 6. Keep items you use more often beside your bed.
- 7. Keep a cordless phone or cell phone beside bed when sleeping.
- 8. Run electrical cords along walls and behind furniture.

Actions you can take:



Bathroom

Spot the Hazard

Check the box if your bathroom has any of these hazards:

- 1. Slippery rug outside the tub and/or shower.
- 2. Slippery tub or no bath mat inside the tub and/or shower.
- 3. Water on the floor.
- 4. No grab bars in the shower/tub area.*
- 5. No grab bars near the toilet.*
- 6. Toilet is too low or too high.*
- 7. Tub that is too high to step into.*
- 8. No bath chair in the shower area, if needed.*
- 9. Clutter. Not enough space to move around.
- 10. Dark or poor lighting.
- 11. Important items are out of reach. For example, shampoo, body wash.

Ways to fix the hazards are on the next page.



Bathroom

Fix the Hazard



Ways to fix the hazards are below:

- 1. Remove slippery rug or use a non-slip rug outside the tub and/or shower.
- 2. Add a rubber, non-slip bath mat inside the tub and/or shower.
- 3. Clean up spills. Make sure floors are dry.
- 4. Add grab bars to the walls of tub and/or shower or use a tub clamp-on rail.*
- 5. Add grab bars to wall near toilet or add a toilet safety rail.*
- 6. Toilet too low: add a raised toilet seat.* Toilet too high: use a lower profile toilet.*
- 7. Add a tub transfer bench or other home modifications to make it safer to get into the tub*
- 8. Add a bath chair so you can sit down when showering.*
- 9. Keep pathways clear. Remove or organize items on your floor.
- 10. Increase lighting, if possible. Add nightlights.
- 11. Keep items you use more often within reach.



Actions you can take:

Stairs

Spot the Hazard

Check the box if your stairs have any of these hazards:

- 1. Clutter on steps.
- 2. Lack of railings.
- 3. Dark or poor lighting.
- 4. Throw rug or slippery mat at the top or bottom of the stairs.

Ways to fix the hazards are on the next page.



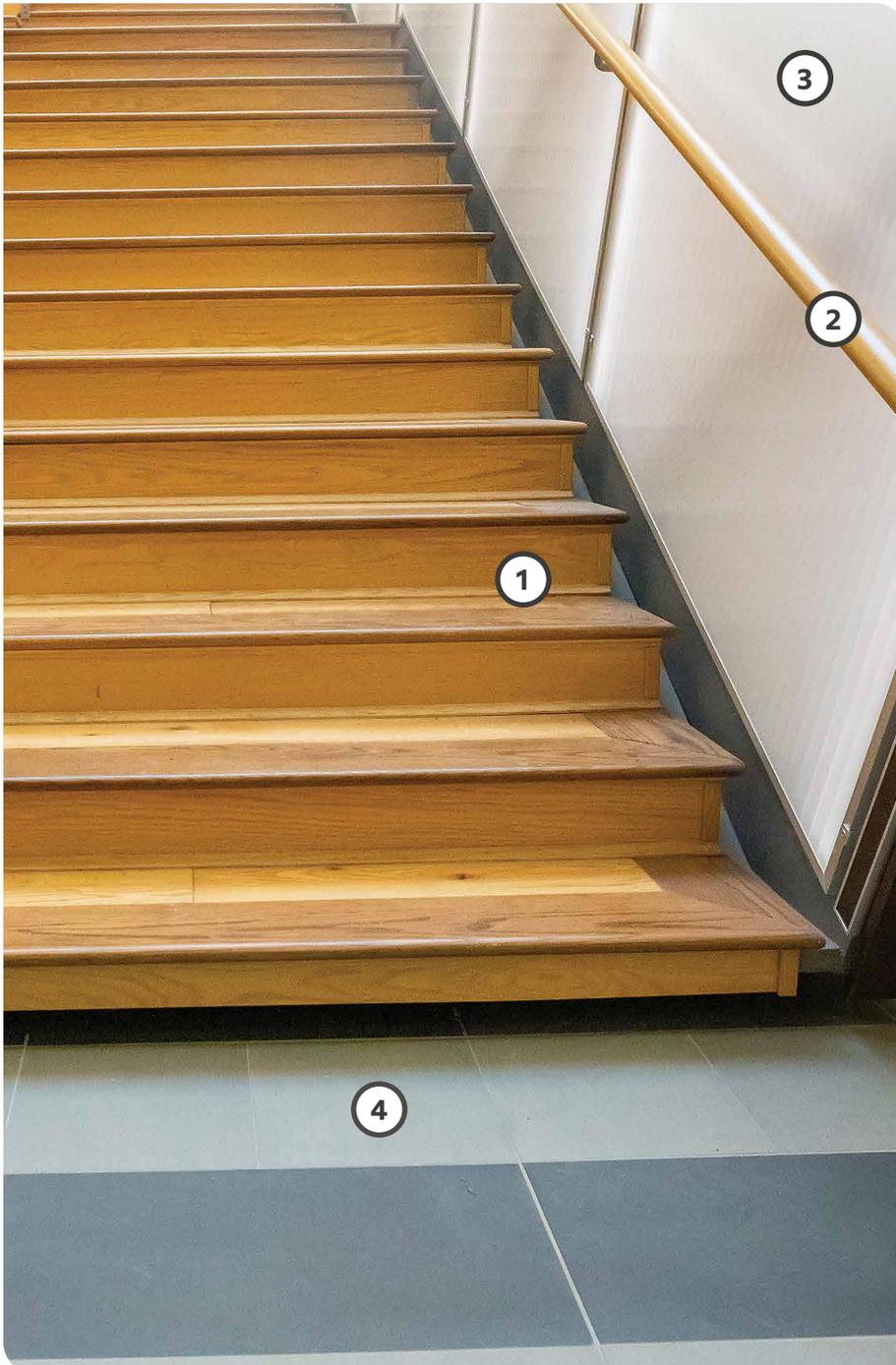
Stairs

Fix the Hazard

Ways to fix the hazards are below:

- 1. Remove clutter from stairs. Keep pathways clear.
- 2. Add at least one railing the entire length of the stairs. Try to have a railing on both sides.
- 3. Increase lighting.
- 4. Remove rug or slippery mat from the top and the bottom of the stairs.

Actions you can take:



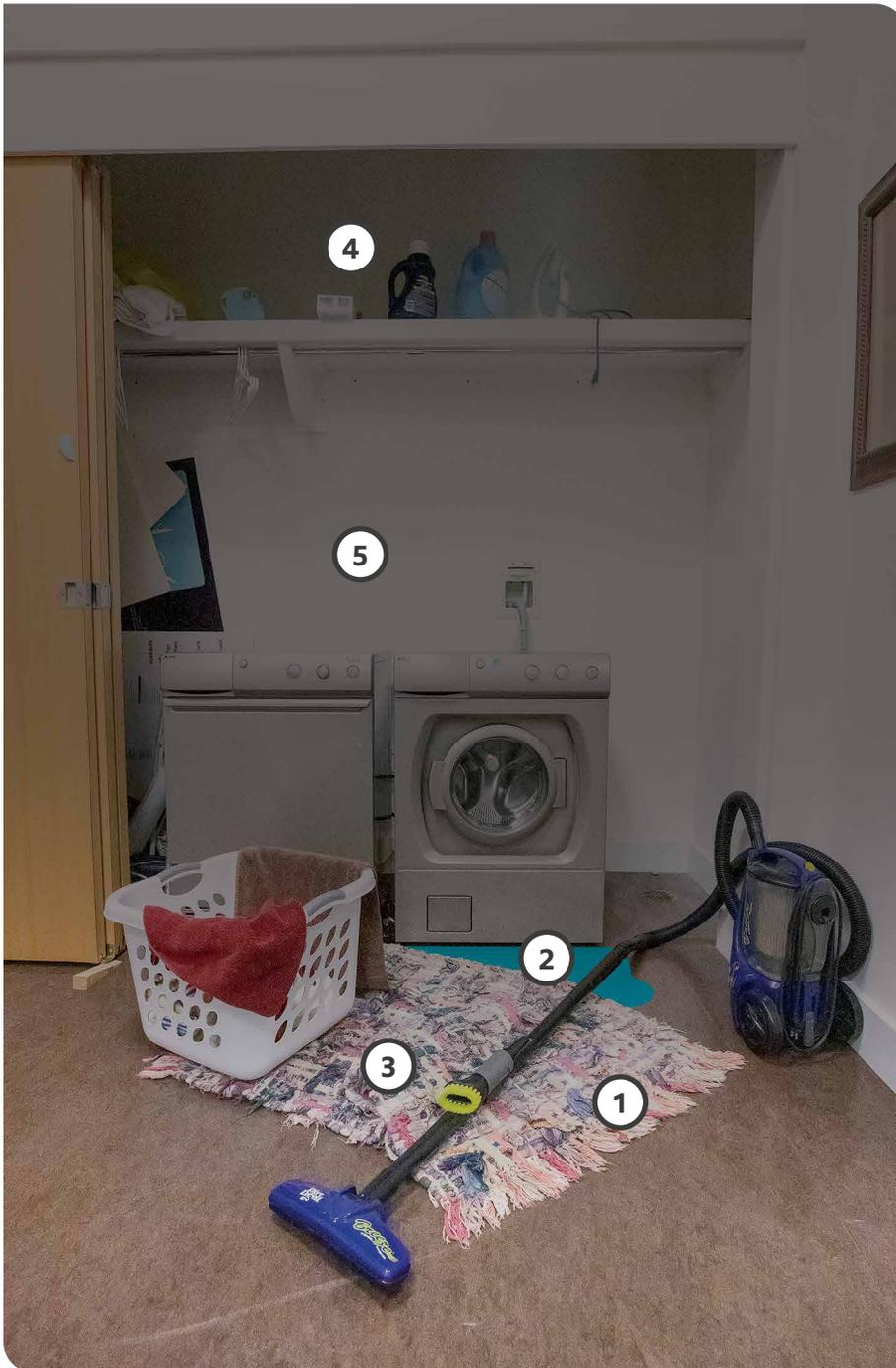
Laundry Room

Spot the Hazard

Check the box if your laundry room has any of these hazards:

- 1. Throw rug or slippery floor.
- 2. Wet floor.
- 3. Clutter. Not enough space to move around.
- 4. Items are too high or too low to safely reach.
- 5. Dark or poor lighting.

Ways to fix the hazards are on the next page.



Laundry Room

Fix the Hazard

Ways to fix the hazards are below:

- 1. Remove throw rug or use a non-slip mat.
- 2. Clean up spills. Make sure floors are dry.
- 3. Keep pathways clear. Remove or organize items on your floor.
- 4. Move items within reach.
- 5. Increase lighting.

Actions you can take:



Spot the Hazard – Action Plan Log

Now that you have identified fall hazards around your home, this Action Plan* can help you plan to address or remove the hazards. **Consult a health care professional for adaptive equipment that can help you age in place.**

Area of Home	Work to be Done/Action	Who Can Help? (Profession, Family member, Friend, etc.)	Done
			<input type="radio"/>

**This Action Plan has been modified from the New Brunswick Personal Action Plan document*

This tool has been developed in collaboration between the Injury Prevention Centre and Alberta Health Services and adapted, with permission, from the Home Safety Self Assessment Tool version 5 international (author: Machiko, R. Tomita, Ph.D., Department of Rehabilitation Science University of Buffalo, State University of New York, January 1, 2017).

Thank you to Dr. Don Voaklander for the photographs.

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