

How Common Household Items Can Harm the Visually Impaired



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[1 in 28 Americans](#) are living with low vision, blindness or another visual impairment - and that number is growing. Within the next 10 to 15 years, experts predict the population of blind or visually impaired individuals will [double](#). Although we all try to live safe and healthy lives, there may be hidden hazards lurking within our own homes - especially for those with vision issues. When we're unable to see clearly, many common household items can pose risks for accidental ingestion, injury or even death. Fortunately, with a bit of planning and education on what household products to buy or avoid, it's easy and inexpensive to modify your home to be safer for all inhabitants.

Here are a few unexpected ways that common household products can actually harm the visually impaired - and what prevention steps you can take today:

Preventing Falls and Injuries

Individuals with visual impairment [don't have to](#) live in fear of slipping, tripping, falling, or otherwise injuring themselves. Many falls and injuries can easily be prevented. For those with low vision, the

American Foundation for the Blind ([AFB](#)) recommends keeping rooms well-lit whenever possible. Good lighting within the home protects not only the visually impaired but also their sighted loved ones. It is also extremely important to [eliminate clutter](#) from the home, and to arrange furniture and other items away from doorways or walking paths, and in ways that will hopefully reduce the number of falls. If you must move a piece of furniture or other item in the home, be sure to immediately put it back in its place after you are done with it and clean up any mess as soon as possible. All of these tips ensure the safety not only of the visually impaired loved one, but also for everyone else in the home.

Medicinal Mishaps

Vision issues can be attributed to accidental overdoses or improperly ingesting medicines due to confusion about which pills to take, or inability to properly read medicine labels. Luckily, there are pill organizers available that can help prevent these common issues. Try using a pill organizer with separate and ordered containers for different days of the week and times of day. Ideally, the pill organizer will have raised letters that can be felt with the fingers to help differentiate the containers from each other. Modern technology has also made life easier for the visually impaired. We can now purchase “talking” (voice) medication pill containers and automatic pill dispensers that have built-in timers and alarms to ensure the correct medications are being taken in the proper doses at the right time of day. Isn't technology grand?

Avoid Accidental Ingestion

While [accidental ingestion](#) is a risk for anyone, it may be a greater risk for those who are visually impaired, according to the Scientific Committee on Consumer Safety (SCCS). The inability to distinguish edible from nonedible products creates risk of accidental poisoning or even death. Of course, this poses a threat not only to the visually impaired but also to children, pets, the elderly, those living with dementia or mental illness, and many other family members as well. Basic household organization techniques can help reduce this risk. Whenever possible, rid the household of products containing toxic chemicals. Next, separate cleaning products and edible items by room. Edible products should be stored in the kitchen. Bathroom cleaning products can be stored in the bathroom. Other household cleaning products can be stored in a closet. Similar products should be grouped together on shelves, to reduce confusion. And finally, wrap rubber bands around products of the same type to distinguish them from different products that might be in very similar containers.

To conclude, visual impairment doesn't have to mean living in fear or with a reduced quality of life. With a little effort and some planning in advance, it's possible to adapt one's home to be more accessible and safe for those with low vision, blindness, or visual impairment. The added bonus is that sighted individuals will also benefit from these quick, easy and affordable home modifications. These are just a few examples of how to modify one's home so that the visually impaired can enjoy independence and a rewarding life at any age.