



Care Partner Guide for Daily Care

Creating a Parkinson's-Friendly Home: Fall Prevention, Safety & Confidence

A Parkinson's-friendly home is not about turning a house into a medical space. It is about **reducing risk, conserving energy, and supporting confidence** so daily movement feels safer and more predictable. As Parkinson's symptoms change—especially balance, vision, and reaction time—the environment plays a powerful role in whether someone feels steady or uncertain.

This guide offers room-by-room guidance and practical modification options, from simple low-cost changes to more involved upgrades, so families can adapt their homes gradually and thoughtfully.

Core Principles of a Parkinson's-Friendly Home

Most falls happen during everyday activities—not during obvious “dangerous” moments. The goal is to reduce situations that require rushing, multitasking, or sudden changes in position.

Foundational safety principles include:

- Clear, uncluttered walking paths
- Predictable layouts with minimal obstacles
- Stable surfaces and furniture
- Adequate lighting at all times of day
- Support during transitions (standing, turning, stepping)

A supportive home environment allows movement to feel intentional rather than reactive. When the home works *with* the body—rather than against it—confidence increases and fear decreases for both the person with Parkinson's and their care partner.

Lighting: One of the Most Impactful Safety Changes

Lighting affects balance, depth perception, and freezing. Poor lighting increases hesitation and missteps, especially at night or during medication “off” times.

Lighting strategies that improve safety:

- Bright, even lighting throughout main living areas
- Motion-sensor lights in hallways and bathrooms
- Nightlights from bed to bathroom
- Task lighting for kitchens, reading, and hobbies

Low-cost options: plug-in nightlights, brighter LED bulbs, stick-on under-cabinet lights

Higher-cost options: hard-wired motion lighting, smart lighting systems

Shadows and glare can confuse visual processing in Parkinson's. Consistent lighting—without harsh contrast—helps the brain interpret space more clearly, reducing freezing and misjudged steps.

Flooring: Creating Stable, Predictable Surfaces

Uneven or slippery flooring is a common fall trigger.

Flooring safety considerations:

- Remove loose throw rugs or secure them with non-slip backing
- Avoid sudden floor height changes between rooms
- Keep cords, pet toys, and clutter off floors
- Use non-slip mats in kitchens and bathrooms

Low-cost options: removing rugs, non-slip rug pads, cord covers

Higher-cost options: continuous flooring, textured vinyl or slip-resistant surfaces

Even small thresholds or curled rug edges can interrupt gait and trigger freezing. Smooth, consistent flooring supports confidence and flow when walking.

Furniture: Supporting Safe Sitting, Standing & Transfers

Furniture should actively assist movement.

Furniture safety recommendations:

- Chairs with armrests and firm seats

- Avoid low, soft couches that are hard to stand from
- Stable tables that don't slide
- Adequate space around furniture for walking aids

Low-cost options: rearranging furniture, firm seat cushions

Higher-cost options: lift chairs, adjustable beds, transfer-friendly seating

Standing up is often harder than walking. Supportive furniture reduces strain, preserves independence, and lowers caregiver injury risk during transfers.

Kitchen: Reducing Fatigue & Fall Risk

The kitchen combines standing, reaching, multitasking, and slick surfaces.

Kitchen safety strategies:

- Store frequently used items between waist and shoulder height
- Use non-slip mats at the sink and stove
- Sit for food prep when possible
- Choose lightweight cookware and utensils
- Keep floors dry and uncluttered

Low-cost options: reorganizing cabinets, anti-fatigue mats

Higher-cost options: pull-out shelves, seated prep areas, lever-handle faucets

Reducing unnecessary reaching and standing helps conserve energy and lowers fall risk, especially later in the day when fatigue sets in.

Bathroom: Prioritizing Early Safety Changes

Bathrooms are one of the highest-risk areas in the home.

Essential bathroom modifications:

- Grab bars by the toilet and in the shower (professionally installed)
- Non-slip mats or adhesive strips

- Raised toilet seats if standing is difficult
- Shower chairs or benches

Low-cost options: non-slip mats, toilet risers

Higher-cost options: walk-in showers, roll-in designs, permanent grab bars

Bathroom safety upgrades are most effective when done *before* a fall occurs. Grab bars should always be secured into studs—towel racks are not substitutes.

Bedroom: Supporting Safe Transitions Day & Night

Many falls occur when getting out of bed, especially at night.

Bedroom safety tips:

- Clear, well-lit path from bed to bathroom
- Bed height adjusted for easy standing
- Nightstand within reach
- Motion-sensor or touch-activated lamps

Low-cost options: nightlights, furniture rearrangement

Higher-cost options: adjustable beds, bed rails (when appropriate)

Nighttime disorientation and stiffness increase fall risk. Simple lighting and layout changes can dramatically improve safety.

Entryways, Hallways & Stairs

Transitions require balance and coordination.

Safety considerations include:

- Handrails on both sides of stairs
- Non-slip stair treads
- Bright lighting at entrances
- Benches or chairs for shoes

Low-cost options: brighter bulbs, rail extensions

Higher-cost options: stair lifts, ramps

Freezing often occurs at thresholds and stairs. Support and lighting help maintain momentum and reduce hesitation.

When to Seek Professional Support

Consider professional guidance if:

- Falls or near-falls increase
- Transfers become difficult
- Visual misperceptions or hallucinations worsen
- Caregiver strain increases

Occupational therapists can provide home assessments and recommend tailored modifications—often starting with low-cost, high-impact changes.

A Final Thought for Care Partners

Creating a Parkinson's-friendly home is not about limiting independence—it is about **protecting it**. Each thoughtful adjustment reduces fear, supports movement, and builds confidence for both the person with Parkinson's and the care partner.

You do not need to change everything at once. Start where risk is highest and adapt as needs evolve.

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