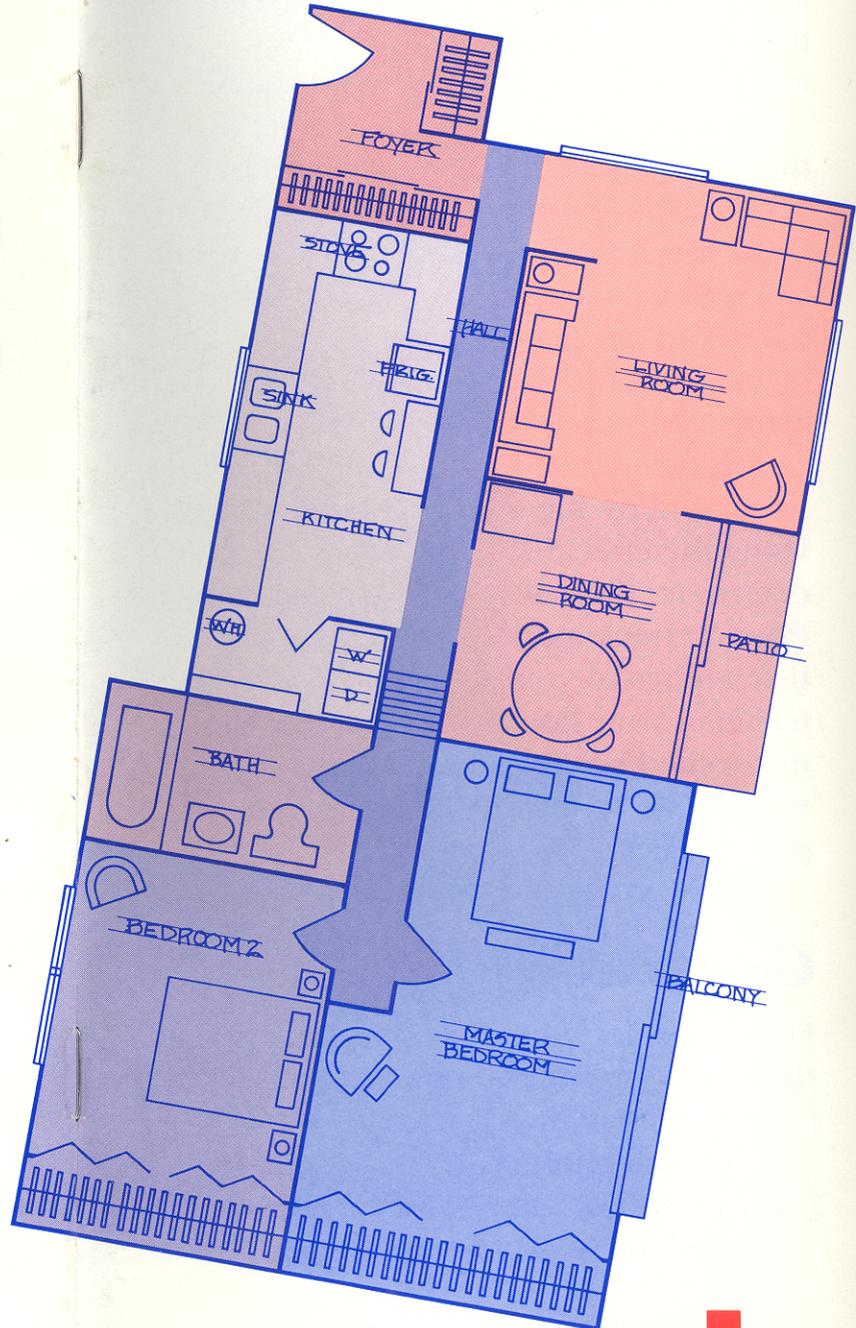


Independent Living Series

HOME SAFETY



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Home accidents are a major cause of injury and death for all Americans. For those over 60, the risk of death and injury may be greater than for others.

People usually become less agile as they grow older. Their bones tend to become more porous and brittle and can break more easily. A simple fall can result in a serious, disabling injury. For these reasons, older people need to take special precautions to ensure a safe living environment.

Most accidents in the home can be prevented by the elimination of hazards. Using the checklists that follow, you can determine the safety level of your home. Place a check mark by each statement that applies to your home or to your habits in your home. Then review the unchecked boxes to determine what else you can do to make your home a safer place to live.

General

First, consider whether your home meets the following general safety standards.

- Emergency numbers are posted by each telephone.
- Appliances, lamps, and cords are clean and in good condition.

- All electrical equipment bears the Underwriters Laboratories (UL) label.
- A sufficient number of outlets are located in every room where they are needed. "Octopus" outlets—outlet extensions that can accommodate several plugs—are not used.
- Overload protection is provided by either circuit breakers or fuses.
- If the house contains do-it-yourself wiring, the wiring has been checked for safety. A municipal electrical inspector or an electrical contractor can do this for you.
- Electrical service is of sufficient capacity to serve the house. (It is up to code.) You can call your municipal electrical inspector to have the wiring in your house checked.
- The thermostat of the water heater is set at 110°F or lower to prevent accidental scalding.
- Medications are stored in a safe place according to instructions on the label of the package or container.
- Carpeting and rugs are not worn or torn.
- Small, loose rugs have nonskid backing and are not placed in traffic areas.

Now, go through your home room-by-room.

Kitchen

Look at the facilities in your kitchen. Place a checkmark next to each statement that applies:

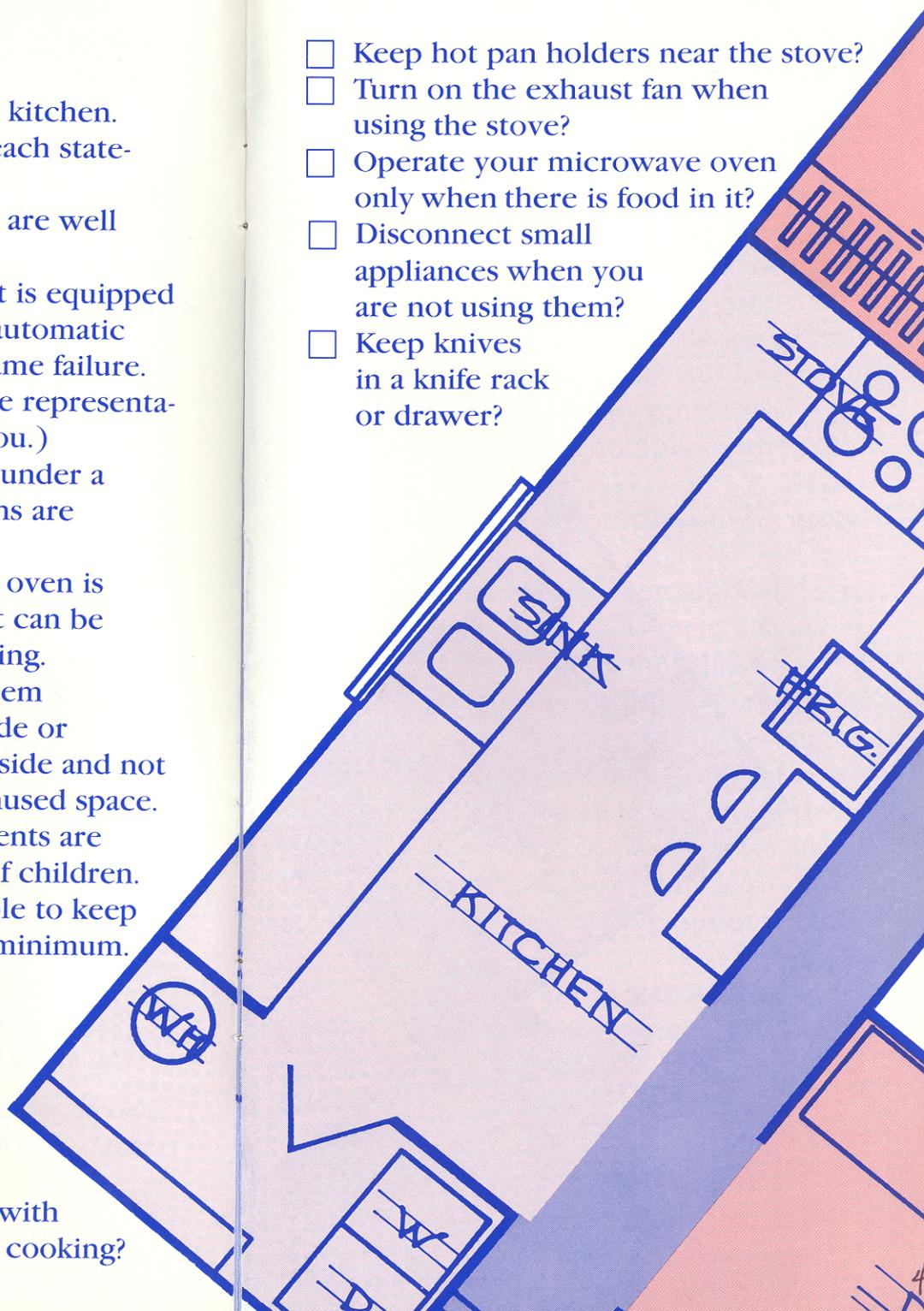
- The stove and sink areas are well lighted.
- If you have a gas stove, it is equipped with pilot lights and an automatic cut-off in the event of flame failure. (Your local utility service representative can check this for you.)
- The stove is not located under a window in which curtains are hanging.
- The exhaust hood of the oven is provided with filters that can be easily removed for cleaning.
- The kitchen exhaust system discharges directly outside or through ducts to the outside and not into the attic or other unused space.
- Hazardous household agents are stored out of the reach of children.
- Countertop space is ample to keep carrying and lifting to a minimum.

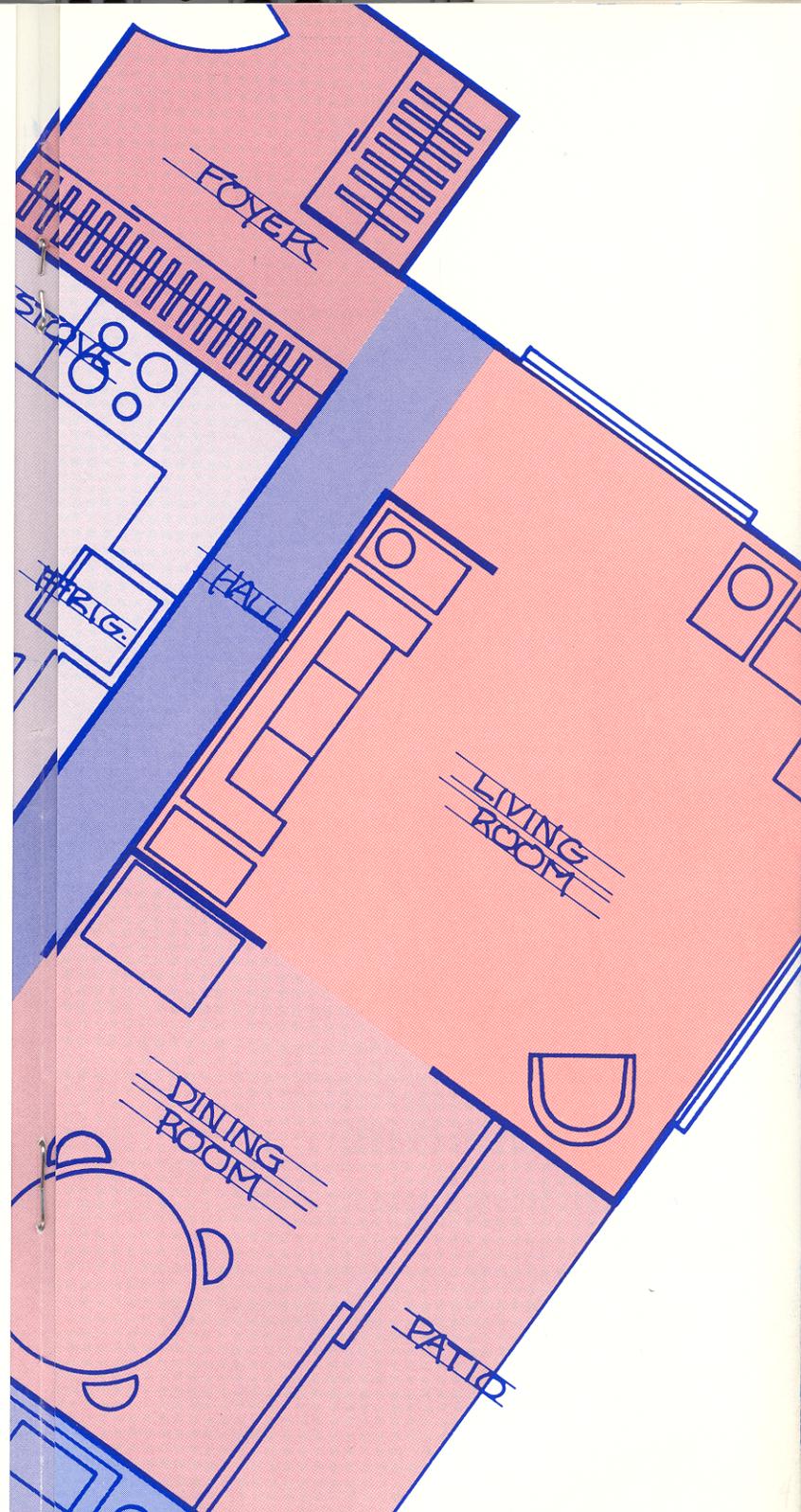
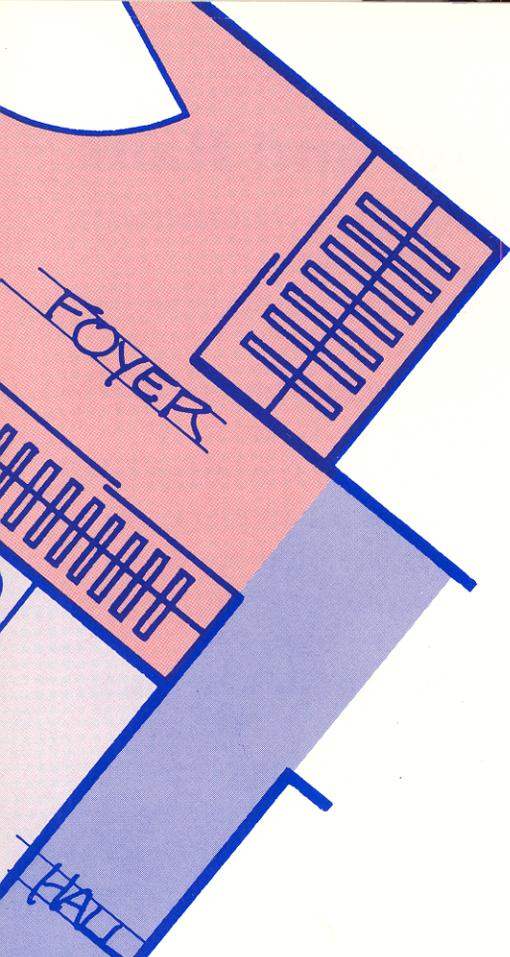
Now, consider your work habits in the kitchen.

Do you—

- Turn pan handles away from other burners and the edge of the stove?
- Avoid wearing garments with long, loose sleeves when cooking?

- Keep hot pan holders near the stove?
- Turn on the exhaust fan when using the stove?
- Operate your microwave oven only when there is food in it?
- Disconnect small appliances when you are not using them?
- Keep knives in a knife rack or drawer?





- Clear counter tops and work areas of all unnecessary objects?
- Keep drawers and cupboards closed?
- Use a stepladder or step stool rather than a chair to reach objects in overhead cabinets?
- Wipe up grease or liquid spills at once?

Stairways and Halls

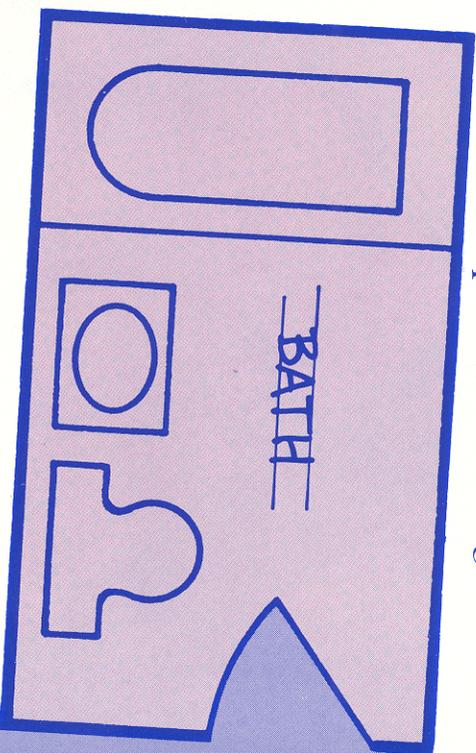
Now, consider whether your stairways and halls are safe for use.

- Steps are in good condition and are free of objects.
- Steps have nonskid strips, or the carpeting on them is securely fastened and free of fraying or holes.
- Smoke detectors are in place in hallways and near sleeping areas.
- Hallways are equipped with night-lights.
- Hand rails are sturdy and securely fastened.
- Balusters (bannister supports) are close enough to prevent a small child from placing his head between them. (If balusters are too far apart, you may attach a temporary barrier to eliminate the problem.)
- Light switches are located at the top and bottom of stairways and at both ends of long hallways.
- Doors do not swing out over stair-steps.
- Clearance in the stairway provides adequate head room.

Bathroom

Check your bathroom to be sure it meets these standards.

- The bathtub or shower has a nonskid mat or strips on the standing area.



- Bathtub or shower doors are glazed with safety glass or plastic.
- Hand bars are installed on the walls by the bathtub and toilet.
- Towel bars and the soap dish in the shower stall are made of durable materials and are firmly installed.
- Faucet and valve handles are unbreakable.

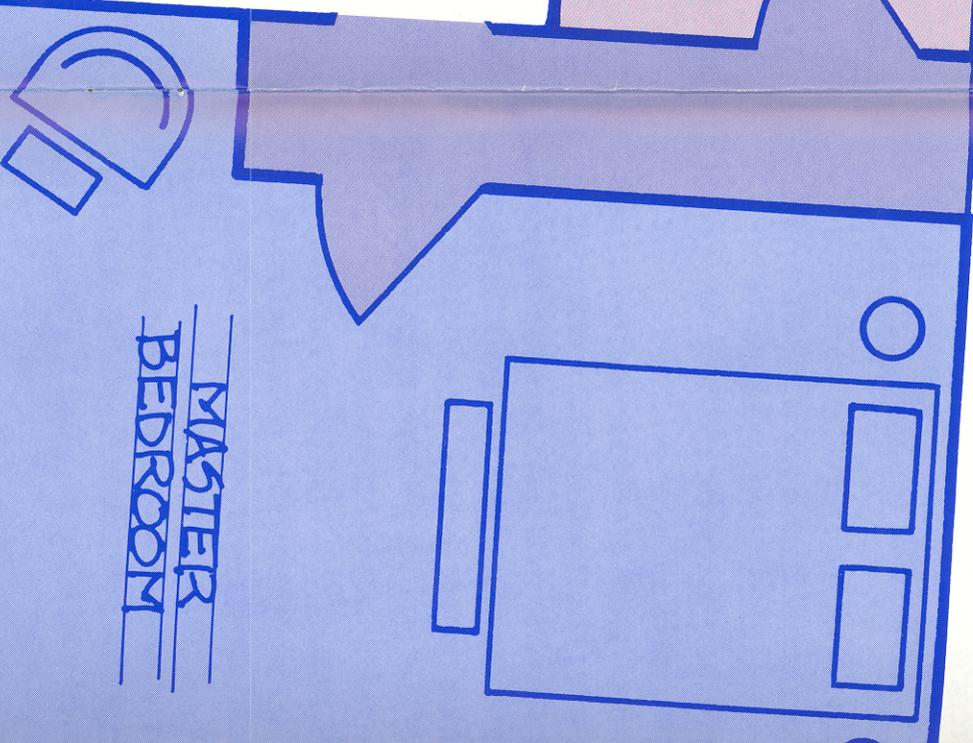
In the bathroom do you—

- Dispose of old medications safely?
- Keep your radio, portable heater, and other electrical appliances away from the bathtub or shower area?

Bedroom

In your bedroom, do you—

- Keep a lamp or flashlight within reach of your bed?
- Use a night light to brighten the way to the bathroom at night?



Outdoor Area

Does your outdoor area conform to these standards?

- Steps and walkways are in good condition.
- Handrails are sturdy and securely fastened.
- Doorways are well lighted.
- Porches, balconies, terraces, copings, window wells, and other elevations or depressions are protected by railings, are closed with bannisters or accordion gates, or are otherwise protected.
- Hedges, trees, or shrubs do not obscure the view of the street from the driveway or hide the presence of a child moving toward the driveway.
- Garage doors are of a type that are easy for you to operate, even when snow is piled against them.
- The house is equipped with a lightning rod system if it is situated in a relatively high, isolated place; antennas are grounded.
- The garage is adequately ventilated.
- Large trees are healthy and well maintained and have no dead limbs.

- Swing-out (awning and casement) windows do not project over walks or other traffic areas.

When working outdoors, do you—

- Store garden and lawn equipment and tools safely?
- Avoid using flammable liquids other than charcoal lighter fluid to start fires for barbecuing?
- Keep toxic materials (for example, pesticide and fertilizer) in their own containers, not in unlabeled jars or soft drink bottles?

Congratulations! You have just completed the first step in making your home a safer place to live. The Red Cross hopes you were able to check all or most of the boxes. If you have spotted deficiencies, you will want to correct them as soon as you can.

The Red Cross is committed to the promotion of health and to helping Americans avoid injury and disease. Call your Red Cross chapter today for information about health and safety courses—or about how you, too, can join in this commitment by becoming a Red Cross volunteer.