



## Falls Prevention - Material Selection

The floor and ground materials  
you select can have a great  
impact on preventing injuries  
around your home.

### The Facts

*1. 60% of all tripping  
and falling accidents  
happen in the home.*

*2. 30% of all people  
over the age of 65 fall at  
least once every year.*

*3. Once you have had a  
fall you are twice as  
likely to fall again within  
12 months.*

*4. The main injuries  
from falls among seniors  
are fractures of the hip,  
spine and wrist together  
with head trauma  
injuries.*

### Prevention is better than cure.

This saying has never had more meaning than when talking about the impact that having a fall in your own home can have on your independence and lifestyle.

One fall causing injury can have very serious consequences on how you can move around, look after yourself and continue to perform daily routines and live independently without help.

In some cases a fall can be the start of a traumatic chain of events that forces you to move from your own home.

### The importance of material selection.

Materials that you select for the floor and ground surfaces both inside and outside your home are very important in reducing the risk of slipping or falling.

Select materials that are appropriate for the location; are they to be used in external or internal, wet or dry environments or a combination of both?

Also consider how easy the material will be to clean and maintain and the durability and longevity of the surface.

## Clean up spills immediately inside and regularly clean outdoor areas.

### Outdoor materials

Materials that are used for external pathways, decks, patios and outdoor areas that are exposed to the weather should be slip resistant when both wet and dry.

Surfaces such as concrete with a textured or exposed aggregate finish, natural stones with a rough finish, pavers with an abrasive finish or slip resistant tiles should always be considered over materials with a smooth or highly polished surface.

Make sure, however, that the finish is not too rough or uneven that walking on it becomes difficult.

The surface of paths and outdoor areas should have a slope to allow water to drain away. Standing water can create a slipping hazard and also cause the surface to deteriorate more quickly.

Wet grass can be extremely slippery, even with just a light covering of dew in the mornings.

If you need to cross grass to get to areas of your yard like the front door, the washing line or garden shed consider laying a formal path to provide a slip resistant walking surface.

### Maintenance

Make sure that paths and outdoor areas are kept clear of debris and leaf matter that could create a slipping hazard and remove mould and any other surface build up immediately to prevent a safe surface becoming dangerous.

### Indoor surfaces

The selection of indoor materials is just as important in preventing slips and trip.

Wet areas like bathrooms, the kitchen and laundry should have a slip resistant floor material that is easy to clean and maintain.

Ceramic tiles are a common choice for many wet areas as well as other living areas.

When selecting your tiles ensure that they have sufficient slip resistance for the area you wish to use them in.

Highly polished or smooth surfaces should be avoided in wet areas and also their safety should also be seriously considered in other areas of your home.

Polished floors or smooth tiles can be dangerous even when dry to a person wearing socks or smooth soled shoes or if you accidentally spill something.

Carpets should be securely fixed and have a low even pile. In general a pile no higher than 6mm. The edges should not be lifting and the change in level between carpet and other flooring not higher than 3mm.

When selecting floor materials always review the suggested cleaning methods and the ease of cleaning. Some highly abrasive slip resistant surfaces may be difficult to clean.

When selecting materials always gather as much information as you can so you can weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of your selection.

There are a number of different slip resistant testing methods depending on the type of materials and whether it is a dry or wet test. For further information about slip resistance refer to the Australian Standards.

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