



[Avoiding Staircase Falls in Your Home or Office](#)

by [John Demas](#) on 12/08/09 at 5:04 pm

Flights of stairs and staircases have become such common fixtures in our homes and office buildings in recent years that we often give little thought to them. However, when stairs are not properly fastened to walls, covered with appropriate surface materials or fastened together properly, even the steadiest walker can suffer a serious fall. Of course, people of all ages are vulnerable to stair mishaps, especially those with certain chronic health conditions, a foot or leg injury, toddlers or the elderly.

Here are some interesting facts and statistics regarding fall injuries sustained in both homes and office buildings:

- The most common type of fall injury for children involves falling down stairs;
- About three-fourths of all injuries sustained while on steps or stairs involve Americans age 65 and older; One-third of all those in this same age bracket fall at least once each year;
- According to one study, older adults (not suffering from either dementia or any other significant disability) who reported problems with climbing up stairs frequently had problems with hypertension, depression, arthritis, poor grip strength and gait abnormalities. Those who had more difficulty with climbing down stairs were more likely to suffer from leg cramps, an intense fear of falling or gait irregularities. Balance problems are common to many of the elderly;
- More traumatic brain injuries are caused by falls than any other incident;
- While designing and erecting staircases in office and other work structures, builders must comply with a vast array of rules and regulations developed by the U. S. Occupational and Safety Health Administration (OSHA);
- When elderly men fall, they are more likely to suffer fatal injuries than women; however, elderly women tend to suffer far more non-fatal fall injuries than men;

All of these facts and statistics indicate a need to greatly decrease the number of staircase falls in homes and office settings. Here are some safety suggestions for those who regularly use or maintain staircases:

- Each stair should be covered by some type of well maintained, reduced-slip surface;
- Hand rails should run along the full length of any set of stairs and they must be covered with a non-slippery surface;
- Safe stairs should be evenly spaced apart, with closed risers in between them;
- Doors should never be located so close to a stairway as to impede traffic in any manner;
- Creating a landing area half-way up a staircase can greatly help older people who need a chance to stop and rest for a moment;
- Well-designed safety gates should always be used when babies and small children are in a home. Children should never be left alone when any staircase is nearby, even when safety gates are in place;
- Spiral staircases should rarely be used in most structures since they can be very difficult to navigate with their different stair widths, lengths and curves;
- Flights of stairs should always be well lit and never exposed to any natural or artificial lighting that might prove blinding to anyone using them; light switches should be located at both the top and bottom of every staircase;
- Stair maintenance checks should be performed several times a year or when any part of a staircase structure appears to be unsteady. Outdoor sets of stairs should be covered whenever practical and flanked by sturdy handrails.
- Everyone in your home or office should make sure that the stairs are always kept free of any clutter;
- Never allow anyone to run up or down the stairs;
- Everyone's safety can be increased by painting stair treads one color and the risers a different shade or color - this makes it easier for people to gauge the height of each step as they ascend or descend;
- Consider installing a stair chair lift for older individuals, particularly when an elevator is out of the question for economical or other reasons;

Hopefully, these safety tips will help you and those you live and work with avoid any falls. Stairs can provide an excellent source of daily exercise if proper shoes are worn and those using them are free of any major health issues. However, always bear in mind that most falls do occur in the home.

Should you ever suffer a fall on the stairs at home or work and suspect a design defect (or other similar issue) may have contributed to your fall, please feel free to contact our law firm so we can assist you. We've helped many clients over the years who have suffered serious staircase fall injuries.