



Situational Safety: Wet Floors

Yellow wet floor signs are often put out in supermarkets, hotels, banks, and beauty salons to help clients avoid a dangerous fall. One place you will never find this warning sign is in your own kitchen. But since more time is spent in the kitchen than any other part of the home, it is the site of many falls due to wet floors and slippery surfaces.

There are three primary sources of water spills and puddles on kitchen floors.

Refrigerator

Refrigerators with water and ice dispensers can cause puddles. Dropped ice spreads out and melts quickly causing wet spots on kitchen floors that create a slipping hazard. Even small puddles and wet spots can take hours to dry. Patients could consider placing a throw rug in front of the refrigerator; to absorb any water or ice that accidentally drops.

Kitchen Sink

Kitchen sinks are a common source of splashes of soapy water, from a high volume of dishes, pots, and pans to wash, and create a high-risk area for falls. Puddles can wet shoes, sneakers, and slippers causing them to become slippery. Throw rugs in front of the sink to catch splashes can reduce wet floor risks. Rugs become wet quickly and are slow to dry, and should therefore be frequently changed.

Dishwasher

Occasionally dishwashers leak, causing an obvious source of water on the floor. Loading and unloading the dishwasher present a more common cause of wet floors. Glasses can hold water, even if placed upside down, and can cause unexpected spills. Tipping each glass before it is removed will reduce the risk of water splashes onto the floor.

Hardwood, linoleum, tile, and slate flooring become slippery when wet, especially with soapy water. Water can also be tracked into adjacent rooms, causing additional slipping risks far from the kitchen. Wet stairs dramatically increase the risk of a fall.

Keep dry towels handy. Ensure that all water is dried immediately after spills and splashes. One in three adults will experience a fall this year.¹ Keeping floors dry can reduce the risk of slips and falls. Patients taking warfarin should report all falls to their healthcare team, regardless of how minor they may seem, as there is an increased risk of internal bleeding.

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1 Garwood, C. (2008, April). Use of anticoagulation in elderly patients with atrial fibrillation who are at risk of falling. *The Annals of Pharmacotherapy*, (42)