

Making Your Home Senior Friendly

Tips on making your home safe and accessible

Entry Ways

The entry to your home is your connection to the rest of the world. It is important for receiving guests, for bringing in the groceries, for getting to appointments and for getting out to social events. It should be safe and convenient no matter what the weather, day and night, no matter what your condition.

Barrier-free entryways make it easier for a family member or friend who uses a wheelchair, or a grandchild who's on crutches because they've broken a leg or twisted an ankle, to gain access to your home.

Examples of barrier-free entryways include:

No-Step Entries

The walkway leading from the sidewalk or driveway to the front entrance has no steps and very little, if any slope, to accommodate someone who use a wheelchair or has trouble climbing steps. A ramp is another type of no-step entry.

No-step Thresholds

Entryways leading into the home and into other rooms are not divided by a threshold, which eliminates a common tripping hazard.

Garage Lift

Enables someone who uses a wheelchair, or has problems climbing steps, to gain access from the garage to the inside of the home.

Bathroom/Bedroom

Space doesn't get more personal than the bathroom. You use it countless times every day. It should be comfortable, attractive and safe.

To increase safety and accessibility in your master bedroom and bathroom, you should consider making the following home modifications:

Bathroom

- **Building a roll-in shower with multiple showerheads (height adjustable handheld showerhead and fixed)**

- **Lowering the bathroom sink and making sure there's proper knee clearance**
- **Installing an elevated toilet**
- **Installing grab bars**

Example of the elevated toilet, the grab bar, and ample maneuvering space.

Example of ample maneuvering clearance, lowered sink with knee clearance and proper lighting.

Example Walk-in shower with height adjustable handheld showerhead.

Bedroom

- **Ensuring there's ample maneuvering clearance**
- **Building a walk-in closet with storage at differing heights**
- **Installing rocker light switches that are easier to turn on compared to a more common flip switch.**

Example Walk-in closet with storage at differing heights.

Example Rocker light switches reachable from the bedside, located 36" to 40" above the floor.

Example Rocker light switches reachable from the door, located 36" to 40" above the floor.

Kitchens

If you love to cook, but find it difficult to bend over, or if you have a height limitation, there are numerous steps you can take to modify your kitchen to make it more "user-friendly," such as:

- Ensuring there's ample maneuvering space
- Varying the height of countertops
- Installing a sink with knee clearance
- Installing a raised dishwasher
- Lowering cooking surfaces
- Mounting a wall oven or microwave at reachable heights
- Making sure there's an abundance of storage space within reach
- Providing a desk/work area with knee clearance

Example of ample work space, raised dishwasher and lowered cooking surfaces.

Example of clearance beneath sink, lowered work surfaces, wall oven and ample maneuvering space.

Example of clearance beneath the sink, raised dishwasher, lowered countertops, and ample maneuvering space.

Example of ample clearance beneath sink

Example of enhanced storage space

Lighting

Lighting sets the mood. Controlling natural light during the day and electric light when you need it makes your home personal and convenient.

One way to reduce accidents in the home is to make sure you have proper lighting where you need it. Outdoor areas, stairways, the kitchen area, the living room and other places where you like to read, are just a few examples where proper lighting is often needed.

Use rocker-type light switches wherever possible. You can turn them on and off with the touch of an elbow if your hands are full.

Well-placed skylights and ceiling lights (pictures shown below) are just a few examples of the type of lighting you should consider adding to your home.

Yard

If you maintain a flower or vegetable garden in your backyard, you may want to consider raising your beds at some point.

Raising your beds can help reduce fatigue and stress on your back if bending over for extended periods of time is often difficult.

Courtesy: <http://www.naipc.org/Default.aspx?tabid=76>