

SIMPLE HOME MODIFICATIONS CAN HELP SENIORS STAY IN THEIR HOMES LONGER AND WITH MORE QUALITY OF LIFE THAN EVER BEFORE

*New Products Available Today Can Make Homes Safe, Accessible and Comfortable;
Help Fend off Too Soon Home Sale During Sluggish Economy*

Nearly every day, stories of home foreclosures and a declining real estate market are on the news and in local papers. And for many seniors, stories like these add to tensions they already may be feeling about selling their homes out of necessity due to safety concerns and daily quality of life issues.

Falling on staircases or in bathrooms, having trouble climbing exterior entry steps and reaching for items stored in high-placed cabinets become real scenarios people face as they age. Until recently, the only options available for many seniors were to move in with family or to sell their homes and transition to some sort of assisted living arrangement. While becoming part of a community of similar people can be a welcome change for some, moving out of a house that has been a home for many years can be frustrating and depressing for many. Factor in a slow real estate economy, and many families are facing not only leaving their homes but also losing money they've worked so hard to make, in the process.

Simple home modifications can make all the difference and allow seniors to stay in their homes longer without sacrificing safety or the things they love. Key areas to consider for improvement are the home's entry, bath and kitchens and staircases.

Falls inside and outside the home are the number one cause of injury among the elderly. Concerned about a loved one's ability to maintain balance? Does he or she have coordination problems? What about walking and climbing steps? There are a number of obstacles inside and outside a home that can cause trips and falls. Door thresholds, curbs, unlit entryways, wet flooring, raised room floors, and carpeting, are just a few.

Entrance solutions

- At least one entrance without steps and a flat or low threshold
- A 5' by 5' maneuvering space at the stepless entrance
- Clean, textured pathways that lead to and from the curb
- Well-lit entry
- Motion sensitive lighting outdoors
- Handrails
- Ramps, or gently sloping path
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Interior Solutions

- 32 inches of clearance through passage doors
- 42-inch-wide hallways where possible
- Bedroom and bathroom on the main floor
- Laundry on the main floor

- No area rugs, and low-pile carpet with firm padding

Reach Solutions

As people age they lose inches from their stature. They may also lose their ability to stand for long periods, or lose their ability to stand entirely. Many daily living tasks become disheartening for an aging adult without easy access to daily necessities.

- Rolling carts provide additional storage space that is easy to reach and can be stored in knee spaces.
- Pull-out work surfaces are helpful below microwaves.
- New outlets or switches may be added at accessible locations.
- New range with front mounted controls.
- Shelves installed under high wall cabinets provide additional reachable storage.
- Existing knob handles replaced with loop handles.
- Lever faucet replaces existing turning knobs.
- Knee space under sink improves access to dishwasher and sink for seated user.
- Refrigerator replaced with more accessible side-by-side model.
- Hanging racks provide reachable storage.

Kitchen Solutions

- Maneuvering space at doors: If in-swinging door obstructs a bathroom or kitchen fixture, use offset hinges, swing door out, hinges door on opposite jamb or widen doorway
- Increase the number of electrical outlets for additional lighting and alarm indicators, especially in bedrooms
- Clear floor space in kitchen with a minimum 60-inch turning circle
- Lever faucet
- Handles, no knobs, on cabinets and drawers
- Adaptable cabinets to reveal knee space

Safety in the bathroom

The bathroom can be the most dangerous room in the home of an aging adult. Are there non-slip surfaces? Enough clear floor space for aided mobility? Does your loved one use a cane or a walker? Is the bathroom a safe place for them when using their mobility equipment? Are the bathtub and shower controls reachable, easy to use and require little strength? Where are the grab bars in the bathroom? Are there grab bars near the toilet, shower and tub? Is a shower chair available and convenient?

Bathroom Solutions:

- 5'x5' clear floor space in the bathroom
- Non-slip flooring
- Bathroom size of at least 5'x8'
- Textured grab bars by toilet, bathtub and shower
- Offset controls in shower/tub to minimize bending and reaching
- 48" by 56" toilet space with centerline of toilet 18" from side wall
- Shower bench and a hand-held shower head
- Curbless shower, with non-slip surface and fold-down seat
- Doors that can be unlocked from the outside
- A bathroom telephone
- Rounded counter edges

Making these changes can be the smartest investment a person can make in their home if it means keeping the home and their independence longer. By enhancing a person's ability to live independently, quality of life is ultimate improved.