



Aging in Place

A COMPREHENSIVE HOME PREPARATION GUIDE FOR SENIORS

As seniors age, their homes may need modifications to ensure safety, comfort, and accessibility. This guide provides practical steps to help prepare a home for aging in place, covering various aspects from simple adjustments to structural changes.

- 1 Home Assessment:** Conduct a thorough assessment of the home to identify areas that require modification. Consider hiring a certified aging-in-place specialist (CAPS) or occupational therapist to assist in this evaluation.
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Entryways and Exits

- 2 Ramps and Thresholds:** Install ramps or smooth out thresholds for wheelchair or walker access. Ensure entryways are wide enough (at least 36 inches) for easy navigation.
Lighting: Ensure entryways are well-lit with motion-sensor lights to prevent trips and falls.
Handrails: Install sturdy handrails on both sides of stairs and at all entry points.
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Interior Accessibility

- 3 Doorways:** Widen doorways to at least 32 inches to accommodate wheelchairs.
Hallways: Ensure hallways are free of obstacles and at least 36 inches wide.
Flooring: Use non-slip flooring materials. Avoid area rugs or secure them with double-sided tape to prevent tripping.
Lighting: Enhance lighting in all areas, especially in stairways, hallways, and bathrooms. Use night lights in key areas to improve visibility at night.
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Living Areas

- 4 **Furniture Arrangement:** Arrange furniture to allow clear, wide pathways. Choose stable, comfortable furniture with armrests. Seating: Use chairs and sofas with firm cushions and a higher seating position to make it easier to sit and stand.
- Telephones:** Ensure telephones are easily accessible in all main rooms. Consider using phones with larger buttons and emergency call features.
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Kitchen Modifications

- 5 **Countertops:** Lower a section of the countertop to allow for seated meal preparation.
- Cabinets:** Install pull-out shelves and lazy Susans in cabinets for easier access. Place frequently used items within easy reach. Appliances: Use appliances with front controls and easy-to-read displays. Consider installing a wall oven and a side-by-side refrigerator.
- Flooring:** Ensure the kitchen floor is non-slip and consider cushioned mats to reduce strain.
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Bathroom Safety

- 6 **Grab Bars:** Install grab bars near the toilet, shower, and bathtub. Ensure they are securely anchored to support body weight.
- Toilet:** Replace the toilet with a comfort-height model or add a raised toilet seat.
- Shower and Bathtub:** Consider a walk-in shower or tub. Use non-slip mats or decals in the shower/tub.
- Handheld Showerhead:** Install a handheld showerhead with a long hose.
- Seating:** Place a shower chair or bench in the shower.
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Bedroom Adjustments

- 7 **Bed Height:** Ensure the bed is at an appropriate height for easy access. Use bed risers if necessary.
- Nightstands:** Keep a lamp, phone, and essential items within easy reach on the nightstand.
- Closets:** Lower closet rods and install pull-down rods for easier access. Use open shelving and clear storage bins.
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Staircase Enhancements

- 8 **Stairlifts:** Install a stairlift if navigating stairs becomes difficult. **Handrails:** Ensure there are sturdy handrails on both sides of the staircase.
- Lighting:** Install adequate lighting and light switches at the top and bottom of the stairs.
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Smart Home Technology

- 9 **Voice-Activated Systems:** Use voice-activated assistants (like Amazon Alexa or Google Home) for controlling lights, appliances, and security systems.
- Medical Alert Systems:** Install a medical alert system with wearable devices.
- Smart Thermostats:** Use programmable or smart thermostats for easy climate control.
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General Safety Measures

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Emergency Plan: Create and practice an emergency evacuation plan.

Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors: Install detectors and ensure they have accessible, working batteries.

Medication Management: Use automated pill dispensers and keep a list of medications in an accessible location.

Conclusion

Preparing a home for aging in place involves a combination of structural modifications, safety enhancements, and the incorporation of supportive technology. These adjustments help create a safe, comfortable, and accessible living environment, enabling seniors to maintain their independence and quality of life. Regular reassessment and adjustments as needs change are essential to ensure continued safety and comfort.

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