



For the Lifespan: The Caregiver Guide

Module 4

The Accessible Home



Objectives

After completing this module, participants will be able to:

- Describe what a home modification is and when changes should be made.
- Understand the benefits to making home modifications.
- Describe minor and major modifications.
- Identify barriers to making home modifications.
- Identify resources to make and pay for modifications.
- Use a home safety checklist.



Home Modification

- Increases accessibility
- Increases safety for a care recipient
- Helps a person remain independent



When Do Home Modifications Become Necessary?

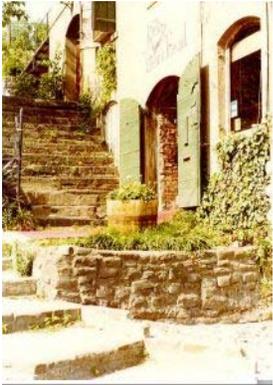
- Accidental injury
- Long-term illness or disability
- Recovery from surgery
- Temporary inability or injury



Benefits of Home Modifications

- Prevents accidents and injuries
- Enables independence
- Prevents or postpones going to a nursing home
- Increases quality of life
- Saves money
- May avoid disruption of moving





Home Safety Checklist

- Exterior entrances and exits
- Interior doors, stairs, and halls
- Bathroom
- Kitchen
- Living room, dining room, and bedrooms
- Laundry
- Basement
- Doors

Other Areas to Consider

- Telephone
- Storage space
- Windows
- Electrical outlets and controls
- Heat, light, ventilation, security, and water temperature



Types of Home Modifications

- Minor
- Major



Minor Home Modifications

- Lighting
- Water Temperature Controls
- Mobility



Lighting



- Change bulbs to the maximum wattage.
- Add more fixtures where lighting is poor.
- Install motion sensor lights.
- Install touch or rocker type switches.
- Use night lights, especially in areas that will be accessed during the night, like hallways and bathroom.
- Lower or add light switches.
- Investigate and/or purchase other types of lights/lamps.
- Install raised dots or lighted switches to locate on/off switches.



Water Temperature Controls

- Install devices to control the temperature of the water, like anti-scald valves.
- Turn the temperature of the hot water heater down, so that the water is 120 degrees Fahrenheit or less.



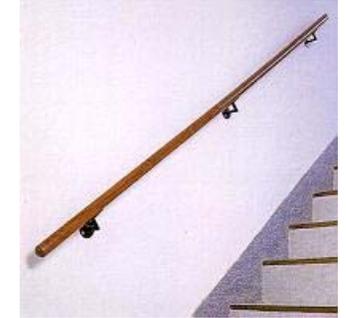


Strategies to Enhance Mobility and Safety



- Place electrical cords out of the way so that they are not in the path of travel.
- Move furniture so there is a clear pathway.
- Ensure chair availability for those who can't walk far.
- Remove loose rugs that may cause a fall.
 - Replace with non-slip backing rugs.
 - Be aware that these may still pose a tripping risk.
- Install or use equipment to prevent falls, such as grab bars.

Flooring and Stairways



- Securely fasten all flooring.
- Increase visibility of stairs and uneven floors by using a contrasting color or tape.
- Install handrails and make sure stairways are well lit.
- It may be necessary to install a non-skid tape to the edge of stairs to prevent slipping.
- Low pile carpet or a hard floor covering surface may need to be installed to allow a care recipient who uses a wheelchair or walker to move around easier.

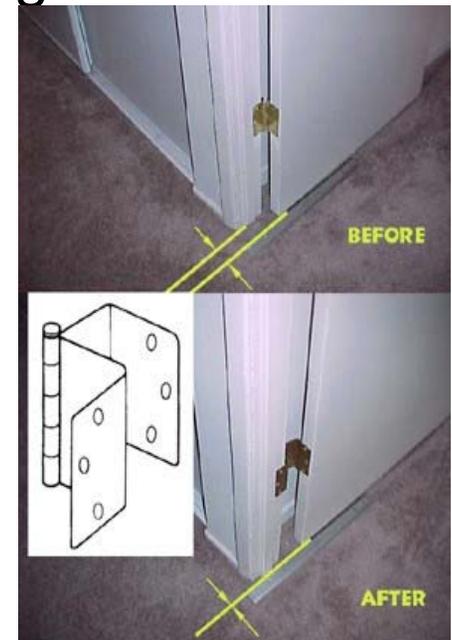
Accessible Storage

- Move items so that they are easy to reach, placing them no higher than shoulder height or no lower than a person's waist.
- Replace drawer and cabinet hardware with handles that are easier to grasp and that don't require twisting or squeezing to open a drawer or cabinet.



Accessible Door and Doorway

- Sometimes to accommodate a wheelchair or a walker, a doorway threshold may need to be lowered or removed to allow easier access for walkers and/or wheelchairs.
- To widen a doorway without extensive remodeling, a “swing-clear-offset door hinge” can replace existing hinges to add a couple of inches to the doorway. They are designed to swing the door clear of the opening.
- You may also remove the door and doorjamb stops to increase the opening size.
- Install kick plates on the bottom part of the door to protect the door from the footrests on the wheelchair.
- A standard interior door is between 30 to 36 inches. Most wheelchairs and walkers need least 32 to 34 inches minimum clearance.



Easier Transfers

- Increase the height of the bed for making transfers and care of a care recipient easier by putting supports under the legs.
- A lift chair can help someone get up out of a chair independently.
- Raising couches and chairs with blocks or bricks creates a higher seat that makes getting up and down much easier.
- Use a bath transfer bench for someone who can't step over the edge of a tub.



Accessible Bathroom

- Install grab bars.
- Install levered handles on faucets.
- Install moveable or hand-held shower heads.
- Use portable shower chairs.
- Place non-skid strips or decals in the shower or tub.



Major Home Modifications

- Widen walkways outside.
- Widen entrances and doorways.
- Install door openers.
- Install ramps or lifts.
- Convert an existing room on the main floor.
- Add on to the home.



Other Major Home Modifications

- Widen hallways.
- Move or install light switches.
- Remodel kitchens and/or bathrooms.
- Add rooms.
- Add stair glide or elevator.



Accessible Hallways and Entries

- If possible, hallways should be widened to four feet. This would be a major change and often times impossible if a hallway wall is a bearing wall.
- Swinging a door to the outside will provide more space in a room.
- Install an automatic or push button door opener on doors.



Accessible Bathrooms

- A shower may need to have a wider opening, with little or no threshold, to enable access by a wheelchair user or someone who can't step over the edge of a tub.
- Counter tops may need to be lowered.
- More space may need to be added around toilets.
- Automatic faucets, dryers, and soap/shampoo dispensers can be helpful if a person has limited hand usage or little upper body strength.



Bath

Shower

Accessible Kitchens

- A lazy-susan or pull-out shelving provide easier access to items.
- Counter tops may need to be lowered or adjustable.
- Floor cabinets can be modified to allow space for footrests on a wheelchair.
- A wall oven may need to be installed.
- Wrap colored tape around post handles for better visibility.
- Use raised dots for location of on/off switches.



Barriers to Modifying Your Home

- Lack of money
- Large project
- Difficulty of the project
- Lack of knowledge



Resources to Help with Home Modification

- Assist, Inc.
- State Division of Aging and Adult Services
- Local Area Agency on Aging
- Centers for Independent Living
- Elder Care Locator
- Call 211 or 1-888-826-9790, or www.informationandreferral.org
- Local home improvement or hardware stores
- Utah Assistive Technology Foundation





Take a Break (Don't forget about you)



In 30 seconds you can:

- Sit down with both feet on the ground
- Rest your hands on your lap
- Breathe slowly and deeply in through your nose and out through your mouth
- Tighten all the muscles in your body
- Hold this tension for ten seconds
- Let go, breathe out, and shake out the tension in your body



Things to Remember

- Remember to take good care of yourself by staying positive, exercising regularly, getting enough rest, eating nutritiously, using good body mechanics, keeping a sense of humor, relaxing, and doing something enjoyable when you can.
- Always believe in yourself and your abilities.
- Remember that you have the strength, courage, compassion, and wisdom to succeed.
- Thanks for your participation.

