



Fixin' to Stay

Remodeling to Age in Place

One of my favorite speakers says we are supposed to mature as we age, not just break down. Most of us want to care for our homes the same way with regular, preventative maintenance so they can mature gracefully right along with us.

Have you thought about improvements that will allow you to stay in your home as you get older? According to an AARP survey, 71% of us over the age of 45 expect to live in our homes as long as possible.

Easy Changes

Here are a few simple things that can make your home safer. Be sure to follow manufacturer's directions carefully, and ask for help if you need it.

- Install nightlights
- Put non-slip strips in the bathtub or shower
- Place non-skid strips on the steps
- Use higher-wattage bulbs (do not exceed the fixture's wattage rating)
- Secure rugs or carpets to the floor with strong, double-sided tape
- Provide a seat for the tub or shower
- Put a telephone and light in easy reach of the bed
- Keep the path from the bed to the bathroom free of obstructions

- Turn down the water heater to 120° to prevent scalding

For the Do-It-Yourselfer

If you have a knack for doing things yourself, you may want tackle these projects. Again, follow manufacturer's directions carefully, and if in doubt, call in a professional.

- Change door locks to be easily operated by a seated person
- Install lever-handled door knobs
- Replace standard showerheads with hose-type, detachable heads
- Install scald-proof faucets with lever handles
- Install grab-bars in the bathroom for the shower, toilet, and tub
- Install hand rails on *both* sides of the stairway (rails should not protrude more than 4.5" from the wall)



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Hire a Professional

Some accessibility features require the assistance of a professional plumber, electrician, or contractor.

For major accessibility modifications, look for a contractor with the **CAPS** training. This is a *Certified Aging in Place* professional who has received specialized training through a program by AARP and the National Association of Home Builders.

- Doorways should be at least 32" and preferably 36"
- Relocate light switches to 36" to 42" from the floor, an easy reach from a seated position
- Install motion-detector light switches so that lights come on when you enter the room, and turn off when you leave (this can save electricity, too)
- Relocate electrical outlets at least 15" or higher from the floor
- Stairs should have risers with a maximum of 7" and preferably 6".
- The stair tread (the part you stand on) must be at least 10" deep for secure foot placement.
- Thresholds should be beveled, and be no more than ½" higher than the floor
- Install a built-in seat in the shower or bath, or install a side-entry bathtub

- Replace flooring surfaces with hard, even floor coverings. Carpeting should be tightly woven over a thin pad.
- Install thermostats no higher than 48" from the floor, and make sure they have large, easy to read numbers and controls
- Widen hallways to at least 36", and preferably 48", for easy maneuverability of wheelchairs or equipment
- Ramps to doors should have no greater than a 1 to 12 pitch (1' for every 12' of length). A 1 to 20 pitch is even better.

These changes can make your home more accessible and "visitable" today, and prepare you and your home to "age in place" together.