

Does Your Home Meet Your Needs? A Checklist Universal Design

What You Should Know

According to a recent AARP housing survey, 83 percent of older Americans want to stay in their current homes for the rest of their lives. They find their homes comfortable and convenient and feel secure and independent there.

However, as people age, the design of their homes plays an increasingly important role in how they manage their daily activities. Homes that were perfectly convenient at age 55 can cause problems in later years, as diminishing physical abilities make daily routines more difficult without some design modifications.

What You Should Know

Take a good look at your home

Simple alterations can prevent one-third of all home accidents. These changes not only increase your safety, but enhance your comfort and increase the likelihood of your remaining independent in your home and community.

So it is important to look at your home with a critical eye. Use the checklist that follows to identify problem areas in every part of your house. On a separate sheet of paper, note any ideas you have for improvement. This example may give you an idea of how to chart your ideas:

Area of the House Yes__ No__ Ideas for Improvement

Kitchen__

Are faucets easy to use?__

Replace with lever handles. __

Then make a list of your daily activities and what you like to do most. Your home should not be a roadblock to your goals. Review your checklist, compare it with your goals, and draw up a plan for modifying your home that will make your everyday living easier, safer, and more fulfilling.

Look at your home as if for the first time...

Answer the following questions for each room/area of the house. Write down any problems you find and your ideas for improvement.

Area of the House Yes No

Windows/ Doors

Are windows/doors easy to open/close?

Are locks sturdy/easy to operate?

Are doors wide enough for a walker/wheelchair?

Are door thresholds raised too high?

Is there space to maneuver while opening/closing doors?

Does the front door have a view panel?

If so, is it at a proper height for you?

Floor Surfaces

Is the surface safe? Non-slip?

Are there scatter rugs or door mats that may be dangerous?

Are there changes in levels?

If so, are they obvious or marked in some way?

Steps/ Stairways/ Walkways

Are they in good repair?

Smooth/safe surfaces?

Are there handrails on both sides of stairway?

Is there grasping space for both knuckles and fingers on railings?

Are the stair treads deep enough for your whole foot?

Are there any hazardous open risers on stairs?

Would a ramp be feasible in any of these areas if it became necessary?

Appliances/ Kitchen/ Bath

Is arrangement convenient and safe?

Can oven/refrigerator be opened easily?

Are stove controls easy to use?

Are they clearly marked?

Is counter height/depth good for you?

Can you sit while working?

Are door cabinet knobs easy to use?

Are faucets easy to use?

Do you have convenience items such as a garbage disposal?

A trash compactor?

A hand-held shower head?

Can you get in and out of tub/shower with ease?

Do you have bath/shower seat?

Are there grab bars where needed?

Is hot water heater regulated to prevent scalding/burning?

Storage

Is storage located conveniently?

Is storage adequate and usable?

Can you easily reach closet items?

Have you maximized your storage space with innovative products?

Electrical Outlets/ Switches/ Alarms

Are outlets/switches easy to turn on/off?

Are outlets properly grounded to prevent electrical shock?

Are extension cords in good condition?

Are they needed?

Do you have smoke detectors in all necessary areas?

Do you have an alarm system?

Is the telephone readily available for emergencies?

Is the telephone equipped for hearing enhancement if necessary?

Can you hear the doorbell in every part of the house?

Lighting/Ventilation

Is lighting sufficient for purpose of area?

Is lighting bright enough for safety?

Do you have night lights where needed?

Is area well-ventilated?

Driveway/Garage

Is parking space available?

Is it convenient to entrance way?

Does garage door have an automatic opener?

FYI: Ideas for improvement that can enhance your comfort, safety, and independence

Lever door handles and faucet handles that operate easily with a push

Adjustable closet rods

A night light in bedroom

No scatter rugs

Handrails on both sides of staircases and outside steps

Brighter staircase lighting

Large rocker light switches that turn on/off with a push

Electric outlets 27 inches above floor

Peephole or view panel in front door

Walk-in shower with grab bars and portable or adjustable shower seat

Hand-held adjustable shower head

Non-skid surface for bathtub and shower floor

Grab bars by the toilet and tub

Tilting or full length mirror in bathroom

Bathroom telephone that is reachable if you should fall

Adjustable countertops or lower counter for work space in kitchen

Rounded kitchen counter tops

Sliding shelves in cupboards, lazy susan in corner cabinet

First floor bedroom and bath to allow living entirely on one level if necessary