

LOW-COST HOME MODIFICATIONS: MAKE YOUR HOME WORK FOR YOU!

Most people prefer to continue living in their homes as they age or “Age in Place.” However, homes were not built to age with us, and over time it may become harder to do daily activities such as cooking, bathing, or managing the stairs. Fortunately, there are simple and often affordable steps you can take to modify your home and make it work for you. This is called **Home Modification**.

Home Modification is the process of making changes to a home to match your changing needs. It considers how you interact with your physical environment and aims to:

- Reduce accidents by making the home a safer place to live daily life and age in place
- Support independent living by making daily activities easier

Here’s an example: Sheila has rheumatoid arthritis and macular degeneration and lives at home alone. Her family members help her obtain a chair in the shower and bathtub, an elevated toilet seat, and grab bars around the toilet, tub and shower for support and safety. To address her vision problems, Sheila increases the lighting in her bathroom, puts a night light by the door, and removes the bathroom rug that is a tripping hazard. These are all simple and low-cost home modifications that will significantly improve Sheila’s quality of life, confidence, safety and independence.

Checklist of Low-Cost Home Modifications: RAISE Your Independence!

Some people think making their home safer and more supportive will cost too much. In reality, many changes are inexpensive and easy. Make your home work for you by taking the following simple and low-cost steps: **Remove, Add, Install, or Signal Emergencies (**RAISE**).**

REMOVE:

- ✓ Clutter on floors and stairs so that there are clear walking pathways
- ✓ Electrical cords from walking pathways by tacking them to the wall
- ✓ Tripping hazards such as unnecessary throw rugs, loose carpeting or uneven areas on floors
- ✓ Heavier and frequently used items from out of reach locations and place within easy reach

ADD:

- A night light to mark the path between the bedroom and bathroom
- A lamp in an easy to reach place by the bed
- Gripper rug pads under throw or scatter rugs
- Ramps to improve access, including low-cost temporary ramps
- Marked edges on steps and uneven thresholds with contrasting tape or paint
- Non-skid strips on tub or shower floors and secure bathmats
- Shower chairs to allow for sitting while bathing

INSTALL:

- Grab bars in and around bathtubs, showers, and toilets for support
- Higher toilet seats to make it easier to sit down and stand up
- Adjustable height and/or a hand-held shower head to improve reach
- Rocker light switches and lever door handles for easier use
- Soft corners and edges to sharp furniture

SIGNAL EMERGENCIES:

- An emergency alert system to alert others if you fall
- A bell on a small dog or a cat - small pets can be obstacles when not seen or heard

How to Modify the Home

1. A home assessment helps identify hazards in the home and recommend solutions. To assess your home, ask your doctor for a referral to an occupational or physical therapist. Depending on your income and age, you may qualify to have a health care professional advise you on changes and/or be eligible for funding support to make the changes.
2. If you are unable to do make the modifications yourself, seek out help:
 - You can hire a building professional, such as a handy worker, remodeler, or contractor. Ask the provider if they have training and experience making home modifications similar to the type of changes you are seeking and ask for a reference list.

You can contact a home modification specialist through the following ways:

- Your [Local area agency on aging](#): may provide home modification services, referrals or financial assistance. Call the free Eldercare Locator at: 800-677-1116
- Your [Independent Living Center](#) will be a helpful resource, too.
- [Rebuilding Together](#): helps low-income homeowners with affiliates in many areas.
- The [National Directory of Home Modification and Repair Resources](#) lists providers by city.

Home Modification for Renters: You don't have to be a homeowner to make home modifications - renters are allowed to make changes to their homes! Under the federal Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988, landlords in structures with four or more units must allow reasonable home modification requests to allow tenants to remain living in their home. Contact your local Fair Housing Office to learn more.

Resources: The Fall Prevention Center of Excellence offers a collection of helpful resources that suggest how to make homes safe and where to find services, programs, and funding support in your area. Visit: homemods.org