



Aging in Place



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coming years you will hear more and more about aging in place. Why do I think that? For years society has been getting ready for when Boomers hit their stride, when they hit middle age, when they hit their prime earning years... well guess what? They hit each of those benchmarks and at unprecedented levels. An estimated 10,000 people a day will become eligible for Social Security benefits over the next two decades. It is not likely for those folks to be sitting on the front porch. You will more likely find them on the tennis court, hiking, bicycling, at the gym, or on the internet. Boomers are active, curious, savvy, with high expectations in life.

As physical limitations and challenges present themselves we are often quick to feel like a burden or somewhat useless. Honestly though, it's not you, it's the house.

One of the most common problems we face as we age is living in

maintain personal hygiene.

"Aging in place" is simply a matter of preserving the ability for people to remain in their home and neighborhood as long as possible. In the

question is, are you ready to make this journey while staying in your own home? Is your house "user friendly" as you age and need to do everyday tasks like cook, laundry, dishes, read the paper, bathe and

Perhaps cheese ages to perfection, but let's face it, we don't like to talk about aging and often don't want to admit that we are getting older.

Do you realize that the only time in our lives when we like getting older is when we're kids? If you are under 10 years old, you are so excited about aging that we measure it in fractions. When asked, "how old are you?", our reply would be "I'm four and a half going on five." We will seldom claim to be forty and a half or fifty and a half, however many have tried to stay twenty-nine and a half indefinitely.

We become 21, turn 30, push 40, reach 50, make it to 60, hit 70, get into our 80's, and was just 92. The



a home that has become unsafe or no longer meets our needs and abilities. It doesn't have to be this way. Homes can be modified, often

in easy and inexpensive ways that make them more suitable for all residents — both young and old. Other changes may require a bigger investment of time and money. Identifying needs and planning now for improvements will give you a better chance of staying in your home as long as you want. Moving to another home or community should be a choice, not a necessity.

Let's take a look at some things that can be done to

a home. Please remember there is no "one size fits all." Everyone has different capabilities, vision, momentum, reach, strength, and endurance. Each solution can be tailored to individual needs. Let's start as you enter the house:

- ▶ Are the **house numbers** large and **visible** so that emergency crews can find you if needed?
- ▶ Is the **driveway smooth** enough to prevent tripping while walking?
- ▶ Does **water puddle** anywhere that can potentially become ice in the winter and potentially cause injury?
- ▶ If you have a **ramp**, the maximum slope should be 1" height for



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every 12" of length.

► **Motion censored lights** along the walkways, stairs, and entrances are a great value when it's dark.

► A **bench** or a place to sit down **at the entrance** can be beneficial for finding keys or placing packages while unlocking.

► Replacing old **toggle light switches** with the new rocker style light switches which will allow easier operation.

► **Smoke detectors** should be mounted in every room throughout the house.

► In the kitchen, **wall cabinets** can be lowered to 48" from the floor. Base cabinets can be configured to give knee space at critical areas to allow you to work while you are sitting. Installing pull out / roll out shelves, extended drawer guides will assist with easier access to storage. Light and appliance controls should be located on front edge of base counters so you don't have to stretch to operate.

► Side by side **refrigerators** are easier to access if you use a walker or wheel chair.

► The **bathroom door** should be at least 32" wide. It is best for the door to swing out so if you fall in the bathroom, the door can still be opened in order to get help. Use a door knob that can be unlocked from the outside in case of an emergency as well.

► The **toilet** should have 18" of free space in front and a seat 17" high. Grab bars should be mounted on either side and back wall of toilet. If applicable, 42" of space beside the toilet will allow easier transfer from a wheelchair.

► The **bathtub** should be a non-slip surface. Have a flat edge on

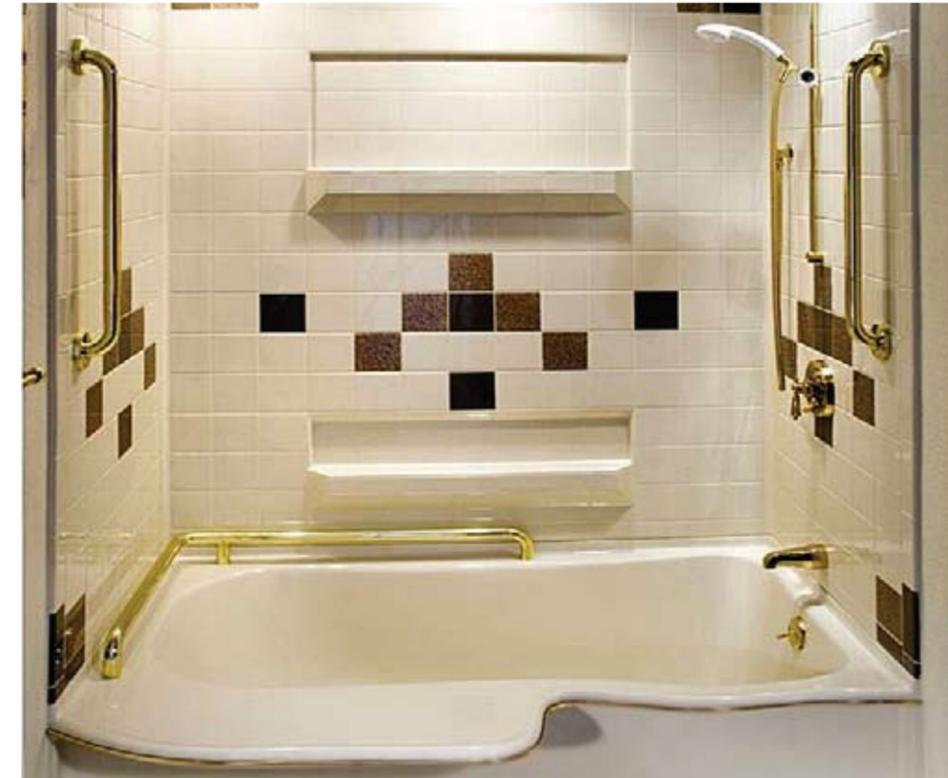
the tub where you can sit. Mount the water controls at a location where you can reach them from outside the tub. Use anti-scalding / pressure balancing valves and use a hand held wand.

► **Showers** should be walk-in or barrier free with a non-slip surface.

► It's a good idea to have a **phone in the bathroom** within reach of the tub in case of an emergency.

These items represent only a partial list of what can be done to your house. Remember, it all needs to be personally applicable to your situation and needs as they change with time.

R&A



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