

6 Must-Have

HOME MODIFICATIONS FOR LOVED ONES AGING IN PLACE

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While assisted living communities boast convenience, amenities, and even luxury, not all seniors favor moving. Aside from the comfort and convenience of aging in place, long-term assisted care costs continue to rise. Meanwhile, some areas have seen a shortage of available care facilities. Because of these reasons, it's not a surprise that more people are now choosing to age in place.

Designing and modifying a home fitted for long-term care may seem challenging, but there are many available options to accomplish this – both for our loved ones' safety and convenience whether they are permanent or temporary modifications. We'll run you through these modifications to help you effectively senior-proof your home.

The Benefits of Aging in Place

A few of the reasons why aging in place remains a favored option include seniors wanting to remain in their own homes, in the comfort of a familiar neighborhood, as well as avoiding the prohibitive senior living community fees. Yes - aging in place makes more familial and financial sense.

- **It costs less** - Living in nursing homes and assisted living facilities are thousands of dollars more expensive than living at home and paying for part-time care.
 - **It's more comfortable** - It's always more comfortable at home instead of staying in an unfamiliar room. Seniors find comfort in the familiarity of their home, not to mention the privacy that they have compared to living in a nursing home.
 - **It helps slow memory loss** - Being surrounded by a familiar environment with friends and family that you love has been proven to help slow down memory loss.
 - **It strengthens social networks** - Being able to stay near family, friends, and being part of your community can help them strengthen social networks. The freedom to invite people over and host events helps build our loved one's social network.
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6 Must-Have Home Modifications for Aging in Place

1 Install Handrails and Ramps.

Mobility takes priority in terms of getting ready to age in place. Handrails are essential home additions to help prevent falls, while ramps provide added independence and make it easier for wheelchair users to move around.

Handrails can be installed throughout, specially in places most frequented such as the bathroom and the kitchen. Ramps, on the other hand, will be helpful in both external and internal parts of the home.

When in doubt about installing ramps, you may seek out non-permanent, mobile versions available on the market. These can easily be installed, even by non-professionals.

2 Widen halls and doorways.

Still another big point for mobility, wider halls and doorways is especially helpful for seniors who rely on mobility aids like wheelchairs and walkers. This may involve more complicated changes needing professional work, or even major renovation; but it will be well worth it, as it adds to ease of use.

3 Modify your kitchen.

As seniors age, they would want to walk less and would eventually find that most cabinetries seem too high. It would be beneficial to custom-fit the height of counters, lower the sinks, place appliances in more accessible areas, and ensure day-to-day items can easily be located.

Visualize how your seniors would move around - will they reach for something while seated? Will they have enough energy to grab a stepladder and reach for something off the cabinets?

4 Simplify your bathrooms.

The bathroom poses multiple risks for seniors aging in place. It is very easy to slip and fall, if proper care is not considered. Bathtubs may be replaced with walk-in showers which provide easier and safer entry. Anti-slip or safety strips may also be utilized for the bathroom flooring to prevent falls.

5 Consider senior-friendly furniture and fixtures.

Unlike regular household furniture, these are designed to accommodate the physical challenges that seniors may face. A few of these include assistive seating such as lifting seat which helps assist seniors from a sitting to a standing position, and easy-use fixtures such as oversized light switches and lever-style door handles.

6 Setup medical alert systems.

It doesn't have to be too complicated - medical alert systems can come in the form of easy-to-use mobile apps and smart watches, which can easily be connected to a home base. This provides monitoring to seniors and can be set up to alert preset contacts and emergency services, on top of being able to provide health appointments and medication reminders.

Some seniors may find it difficult to adjust to using these automated systems, but it will definitely contribute to the home's safety, so make sure to pick the easiest ones to use.



If Modifications Aren't Enough for the Current Home

Make a Move Sooner Than Later

Moving is overwhelming, especially for older folks. The number one mistake families make is leaving a move too late. It's an emotional decision and can cause unrest and friction.



Helping a senior loved one make the decision to sell their home and move into a safer environment requires patience, understanding, and empathy. Start by having open and honest conversations about their current living situation and the challenges they may be facing. Listen to their concerns and fears attentively. It's crucial to involve them in the decision-making process, ensuring they feel empowered and in control. Provide information about the potential new home, emphasizing the goal of independent living and the benefits it offers, such as accessibility and social opportunities. Consider taking them on a tour of single level homes and 55+ Communities so they can see firsthand how it could enhance their daily life. Additionally, involve other family members or friends who have gone through similar experiences to share their positive stories. Address their emotional attachment to their current home with sensitivity, acknowledging the memories but also highlighting the prospect of creating new, happy memories in a safer environment. By approaching the conversation with love, patience, and understanding, you can help them navigate this significant decision with confidence and a sense of security.

Use Outside Resources to Help

There are many outside services that can help organize, declutter, make repairs and prepare your loved one's home for the market.

These are only a few suggestions, and may change depending on the senior's needs. The key is to plan ahead and think about how these needs may change. It would also be important to keep essential contacts close, such as in-home care assistance, meal deliveries, and house maintenance services, as these may come handy in times of need.

Essentially, the most important home modifications are custom and centered around making the home safe, accessible, and assistive. So when thinking about which home modifications to prioritize, keep habits and details in mind.

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I'm here to help!

Sonya Stauffer

Please look to me as your resource for anything home related. If you need to declutter, downsize, decorate, improve, move or store, I work with a stellar network of professionals that I am happy to match with your needs. If you need advice or just want to chat about the market, reach out anytime!

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