

Aging in Place: Bedrooms, Bathrooms, and Basic Self-Care

“Aging in place,” is not having to move from one’s present residence in order to secure necessary support services in response to changing needs. By taking advantage of the following suggestions, you may increase your ability to remain in your home and to age in place.

Bedroom

If you have multiple levels in your home, it is recommended that at least one bedroom be on the main level of your home. This allows you to remain in your home if, for some reason, you become unable to climb the stairs. This can be a temporary move to the first floor, such as after surgery or for a broken bone, or a permanent move.

Your bedroom should include the following features:

- Door 32 to 36 inches wide with lever handle
- Smooth transition if floor type changes
- Light switches by door and possibly by bed
- Electrical outlets no lower than 15 inches from the floor
- Three-foot allowance on both sides of the bed (if available)



Figure 1: Lever handle for door

Bathroom

To age in place, your home needs a full-sized bathroom on the main level. Family members and guests will appreciate the extra space, but more importantly, the bathroom will be accessible for you or guests who use walkers or wheelchairs. A shower stall without a step-over is more convenient than a bathtub for most; however, if you have a bathtub, some options are to purchase a bath bench with legs that can straddle on both sides of the tub or install a transfer seating area at the end of the existing tub.

Your bathroom should include the following features:

- Door 32 to 36 inches wide
- Lever handle instead of door knob
- Non-slip flooring
- Raised toilet
- Grab bars

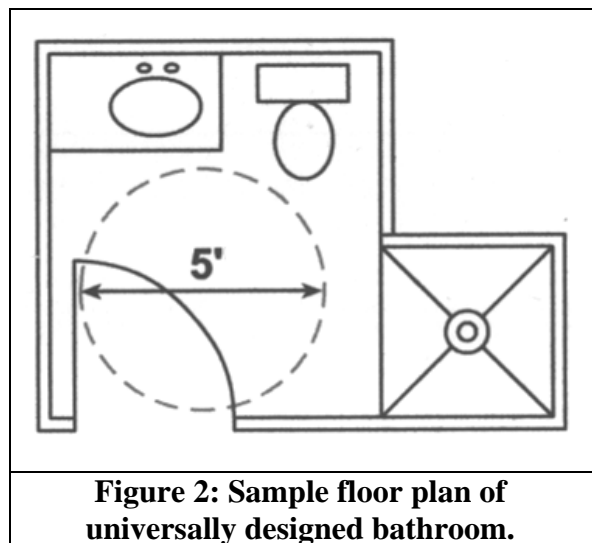


Figure 2: Sample floor plan of universally designed bathroom.

Basic Self-Care

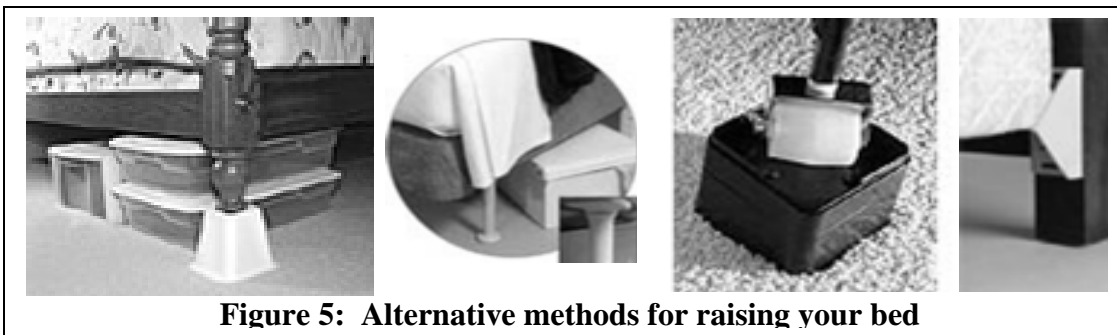
When individuals start having trouble with their basic self-care needs, such as dressing or bathing, generally one or a combination of coping strategies are used. The three most common types of self-care coping strategies are: use of equipment or devices, changes in behavior, and modifications in one's environment.

The range of tools, devices, technologies, and equipment being used to support self-care is broad and complex, but there are some commonalities you should consider, including the following:

- The best benefit will result from the most appropriate solution for your needs. Rather than being “technology-driven,” all solutions must be “needs-led.” Identify the problem area and use the most appropriate equipment or device, not the most expensive.
- There is considerable scope for improved outcomes at modest investment through effective use of simple, inexpensive devices and technologies; for example, long-handled shoehorns and dressing sticks.



- As we increase in age, housing and self-care solutions can be implemented quickly by using items that we already own; for example, raising your bed a few inches instead of buying a new one. Making small changes and additions now will make modifications less cost-prohibitive in the future.



- New items are being developed everyday. You need to determine what your needs are to assess the effectiveness of the wide range of products available.