

# Aging-in-Place Guide

## Staying in Your Home in Later Life

*How to Plan Now So You Can Stay in Your Home*

From Right at Home<sup>®</sup>

*With the Expert Advice of Dr. Rein\**

- Accessible Hallways
- Accessible Master Bath ✓
- Enlarged Laundry Room
- Double-Sided Tape Under Rugs
- Handicapped Accessible Doors
- Install Hand Rails ✓
- Install Grab Bars ✓
- Optional Ramp



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The Right Care, Right at Home<sup>®</sup>

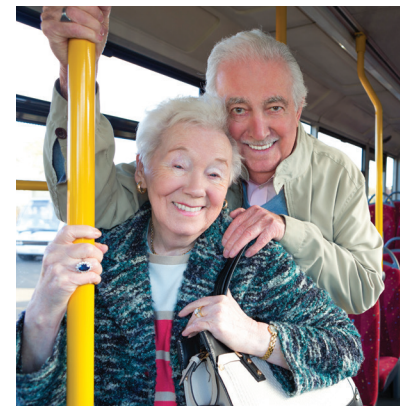
# What Is Aging in Place?

“Aging in place” describes the desire to live in your own home in later life, as long as you are able. Remaining in your own home may involve social support and care services to help you live safely and independently. Ensuring your living environment has been adapted to your abilities — including necessary home modifications — is key to aging in place successfully.

The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) reports that nearly 90 percent of seniors want to stay in their own homes as they age. AARP research further notes that 69 percent of aging parents and 75 percent of their adult children think about the parents’ ability to live independently in the years ahead. But certain aging and health challenges can affect everyday activities for older adults inside and outside the home.

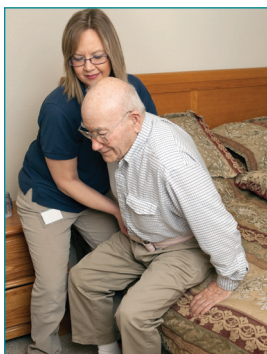
## Unsafe Aging Conditions

As loved ones age, balance becomes a significant issue due to a variety of factors, including physical weakness, medications, and cognitive and visual impairment. Normally a source of comfort for aging loved ones, the home can become hazardous without a fall-preventive strategy. Right at Home suggest you proactively and regularly assess the senior loved one’s home for anything that might be a health risk. In addition, you should determine whether your loved one can do the following in a safe manner:



- Go up/down stairs
- Get in/out of bathtubs/showers
- Get up from/sit down on beds, chairs and toilets
- Reach up/bend down to retrieve items from closets and shelves
- Drive
- Use public transportation
- Maintain and keep up the home
- Manage one’s health

After observing any safety concerns, suggest an agreeable solution.



### Are You at Risk for a Home Accident?

- History of falling
- Inability to get up after a fall
- Extended periods of solitude at home
- Balance and/or vision impairment
- Cognitive problems, including dementia
- Multiple prescription drugs that affect motor skills and/or balance
- Various chronic health conditions (Parkinson’s disease, severe arthritis, stroke, etc.)
- Limited mobility

Be sure to discuss any of these risk factors with your physician. Aging in place requires an individualized plan that carefully considers a person’s functional abilities and any hazards and obstacles in the home. If you or your older loved one want to age in place — safely and comfortably — making practical home modifications may be the most beneficial solution.

# Making Home Safe Again

nearly **90%**

of seniors want to stay in their own homes as they age\*

## Optional Home Modifications

For individuals who are relatively healthy but are starting to experience or are anticipating aging changes, these types of home modifications could help as they age.

## Needs-Based Home Modifications

Individuals with changing or chronic health conditions that affect balance and/or mobility will need a thorough assessment of how they function in their living environment.

Optional Home Modifications	Needs-Based Home Modifications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add lighting</li> <li>• Remove slick flooring</li> <li>• De-clutter high foot traffic areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add bathroom grab bars</li> <li>• Widen doorways</li> <li>• Secure a personal emergency alert system</li> <li>• Remove steps from entrances</li> <li>• Convert doorknobs to handles</li> <li>• Raise electrical outlets</li> <li>• Lower electrical switches</li> </ul>

Families should prioritize any needed modifications of the home, as seniors generally accept only two or three modifications at a time. In addition, it's important to give older adults a choice out of all the best solutions. Family caregivers are the eyes and ears for making sure elders continue to do well with aging in place.



## Why Modify/Remodel Your Home to Age in Place?

Each municipality has different building permit requirements based on local ordinances, so either a homeowner or hired contractor should check with the Planning Department section of City Hall's website or call for advice. Some homeowner association (HOA) covenants require prior approval before renovations to a condominium, villa, or townhouse, so check with the homeowner association beforehand.

- Increased safety
- Greater freedom to live independently
- Easier use by all family members
- Flexibility for changing health needs
- Peace of mind for family caregivers



### Tips for Adequately Assessing a Senior's Functional Environment:

- Make note of any balance and mobility problems in relationship to environmental conditions (lighting, floor surfaces, furnishings, etc.).
- Contact the senior's family doctor or geriatrician if there is any mismatch between the person and his or her home surroundings that interferes with mobility and/or safety.
- If an illness is detected, the elder's physician could recommend physical therapy or occupational therapy, including a modification to the home.

# Spotting Home Hazards

Potential safety hazards and obstacles in the home are easy to overlook and can be easy to fix.



Home Safety Practices	
Hazards	Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inadequate lighting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep lights on in rooms most often occupied.</li> <li>Use brighter bulbs and more light fixtures.</li> <li>Consider a night light for dark passageways.</li> <li>During the day, open curtains and shades to let in more sunlight.</li> <li>Install extra lighting for pathways from bedroom to bathroom and by steps/stairways.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sliding throw rugs</li> <li>Upended or curled carpet edges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use only slip-resistant rugs and mats (add nonskid matting to existing rugs, if needed).</li> <li>Add carpet tape to keep carpet edges from curling.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clutter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear all pathways and steps of objects and furnishings.</li> </ul>

## Any Difficulty at Home With...

### Walking around?

- Wear shoes and slippers with nonslip soles that grip the floor.
- Consider using a cane to help maintain balance.

### Getting up from chairs?

- Use sturdy chairs with armrests.
- Add firm foam pads to chair and sofa seats.

### Getting up from the bed?

- Move the bed against the wall to prevent the bed from sliding.
- Replace the existing mattress with one thinner to lower the bed height or with one thicker to raise the bed height.
- Attach a handrail near the bed.

### Getting in and out of the bathtub or shower?

- Consider a tub/shower chair and grab bars (towel bars are not designed for this).
- Place nonskid rubber mats or decals on the tub/shower floor.

### Transitioning to the toilet?

- Consider an elevated toilet seat and grab bars.

### Getting objects from kitchen cabinets and closet shelves?

- Store everyday dishes/kitchen supplies within easy reach.
- Keep items no lower than waist level or no higher than shoulder height to avoid excessive bending, stooping and reaching.
- If you must use a step stool, get one with a bar to hold on to; never use a chair as a step stool.

### Walking up and down steps or stairs?

- Don't rush; take your time and look directly at each step.
- Don't carry large packages or baskets that obstruct your vision.
- Watch as you place each foot firmly on the steps.
- Clear stair steps of any items.
- Add handrails to all steps and stairs.
- Consider installing extra lighting at the top and bottom steps.

# Making Change Happen

Acknowledging and accepting the need for living space modifications involves four stages of behavior change.

# 88%

of adult children are concerned about their parents getting older\*



## Stage 1: Pre-Contemplative/Unaware

- Individuals are not interested in change and do not see the need to change. They have no intention of doing anything differently.
- This group tends to avoid information, discussion or even thinking about change and the need for it.
- At this stage, it is useless to attempt modifications.

## Stage 2: Contemplative

- People start to think about the possible need for changes.
- They recognize there is a problem and that they can and should do something.
- There may be a trigger event, such as a worsening of a person's balance and/or a bad fall.
- At this stage, people are very open to information, options and specific strategies.

## Stage 3: Action

- People in this stage make real changes or modifications.

## Stage 4: Maintaining

- By this stage, people are working to consolidate any changes in their behavior, to maintain the "new" status quo and prevent a worsening of their condition. Praise and positive reinforcement are important.

When aging loved ones and others are unsure of future needs for home modifications, our RightConversations<sup>SM</sup> series is a practical approach for effective communication between you and your loved ones. Access RightConversations at [rightathome.net/right-conversations](http://rightathome.net/right-conversations).

# Stay Active

Sitting on the sofa too much leads to weak muscles. Most people think that elders can't build muscles, but this is not true! Strength and balance exercises help increase leg strength and improve balance. While we do lose muscle as we age, exercise can partially restore strength and flexibility.

# 82%

 of seniors would prefer to stay in their homes

even if they begin to need day-to-day assistance or ongoing healthcare during retirement.

and only

# 9%

 express a preference for moving to a facility where care is provided\*

# Visiting Your Doctor

With longer life expectancies, the need for preventive care and frequent medical examinations has never been greater. Regular medical, dental and vision checkups are essential.



- If applicable, optometrists might recommend updating eyeglasses during annual examinations.
- Talk to your doctor about any balance and mobility concerns. Discuss any problems with dizziness, joint pain, weakness in legs, worsening gait or balance, etc. The doctor will evaluate the root cause(s) of the problem and recommend treatment.
- If you are unsteady, a cane or walker might be a good idea to increase stability. Selecting the right device and correct size is critical, as are instructions and training in proper use. A physical therapist can help select the right cane or walker for you and teach you how to use it correctly and safely.
- Have your doctor or pharmacist review your medicines to see if any might make you dizzy or sleepy. This should include both prescription and over-the-counter medicines. Drugs may cause side effects that can interfere with aging in place.

## Healthcare Professionals

How to navigate the various healthcare professions and understand the role of each.



**Geriatricians** are physicians (internist, family medicine practitioner) who are specifically trained in the special needs of elders (memory loss/dementia, urinary problems, fall prevention, multiple medications, etc.). To find a geriatrician, call your state's medical society.

**Occupational and physical therapists** help evaluate an individual's function in the home and work with the elder's primary care doctor to design comprehensive safety recommendations.

**Geriatric care managers** (typically a nurse or social worker) work with families to help with caregiving. Facilitating communication among doctors, the elder and family, geriatric case managers help determine the types of services needed, help with medical management and provide updates about the senior's health. Care managers are ideal for family caregivers providing long-distance care, particularly those living more than an hour away. Contact the Aging Life Care Association at [aginglifecare.org](http://aginglifecare.org) to find a care manager in your area.

**A skilled construction or design professional** can help make a home "aging friendly." Visit [nahb.org/CAPS](http://nahb.org/CAPS) to find someone who is a certified aging-in-place specialist.

**80%** of seniors identified housing features such as nonslip floor surfaces as especially important in later years\*

# Home-Monitoring Technology



Continuing advancements in technology allow more and more seniors to stay comfortable and secure at home, while providing peace of mind for family members. Home-monitoring technologies are becoming more affordable and user-friendly, including:

**Sensors** Installing sensors throughout the home can detect a senior's change in routine, abnormal movements and falls. Sensor mats under mattresses monitor sleep patterns, heart rate and breathing.

**Wearable health devices** Health-centric technology worn as wristbands, biometric shirts, goggles and more measure everything from blood pressure to vision.

**Video monitoring** Elders can check in with relatives and friends via monitoring cameras or video conferencing.

**Mobile apps** Via smartphones and other mobile devices, apps can remind older adults to take their medication, or measure glucose or skin temperature on the spot, or adjust hearing volume.

**Telemedicine** Roving robotic devices allow doctors to remotely complete real-time medical appointments with aging home dwellers. At a distance, clinicians can also track heart rhythm paths for older patients with heart disease or who are at risk for stroke or heart attack.

**Home automation** Smart auto-set devices simplify daily tasks such as opening or securing windows and doors, turning off appliances, lowering countertops and shelves, and adjusting home temperature.

**Fall-detection devices** PERS (personal emergency response system) and passive sensors assess whether a fall has taken place and alert others that an individual has fallen.

Cnet ([cnet.com](http://cnet.com)) offers consumer product reviews of video technology products.

**Most pre-retirees expect they will be able to live independently during retirement; relatively few**

**14%** expect they will need day-to-day assistance or ongoing health care at any point during their retirement.\*

**Living under one's own rules is a key reason for staying in one's own home, with**

**42%** of seniors choosing it as one of their top three considerations.\*

## Age-in-Place Resources

Several resources are available for people interested in learning more about aging in place. As aging parents and other relatives grow older, it can be helpful to take the guesswork out of planning for a safe home environment.

### Helpful Resources

**American Society on Aging**

[asaging.org](http://asaging.org)

**Alliance for Aging Research**

[agingresearch.org](http://agingresearch.org)

**National Alliance for Caregiving**

[caregiving.org](http://caregiving.org)

**National Aging in Place Council**

[naipc.org](http://naipc.org)

### Toolbox

Use these checklists found on pages 2 and 3 to determine the safety of aging home dwellers.

- Are You at Risk for a Home Accident?**
- Tips for Adequately Assessing a Senior's Functional Environment**



## Our RightCare is the Difference:

We exceed your expectations by providing the right care every time with the reliability and quality of an international system. We are the Right People doing the Right Things the Right Way for the Right Reason®.



### RIGHT PEOPLE®

The personal care of a friend with dedicated local owners and trained, committed and compassionate caregivers.



### RIGHT SERVICES®

The care they need when they need it with a wide range of services and flexible scheduling.



### RIGHT APPROACH®

A personalized Care Plan managed by professionals with caregiver matching based on a thorough assessment.



### RIGHT MISSION®

A resolute passion to improve the quality of life for those we serve means peace of mind for you.

**75%**  
of adult children &  
**69%**  
of parents

think about the parents' ability to live independently as they get older.\*



A number of items should be considered when remodeling a home. For best results, families should focus proposed modifications on the functional problems of the person living in the home. If eyesight is failing, look for home changes that help vision. If arthritis impairs mobility, focus on modifications that support safe movement.



**77%** of seniors identified housing features such as an entrance without steps as especially important in later years\*

## General Household

- Adapt the lower floor of the home for possible one-level living.
- Arrange or remove furniture to allow for clear, wide passageways.
- Place electrical and phone cords out of the way and along the wall.

## Bathroom

- Arrange for the shower to have a low threshold for easier entry/exit.
- Add grab bars at the back and sides of the shower, tub and toilet.
- Be sure the shower and bathtub contain permanent or removable seating; bath benches can help with balance or transfer problems.
- Allow for turnaround and transfer space for a walker or wheelchair (36 inches x 36 inches).
- Convert to comfort-height toilets that are 2 to 3 inches higher than traditional models.
- Use anchored, decorative grab bars as towel bars.
- Add a nonskid mat or nonslip strips in the shower and/or bathtub.
- Choose out-swing, in-swing or pocket doors depending on mobility and access issues.
- Reinforce bathroom walls with blocking (i.e., a wood stud or other solid surface) so grab bars can be installed throughout the room.
- Be sure floor rugs are rubber-backed or secured with double-sided rug tape or rubber carpet mesh.
- Outfit the shower with a handheld or adjustable showerhead.
- Place bathroom cabinets and shelves within easy reach.

## Bedroom

- Place the bed in a way that allows easy access to the bathroom.
- Secure large area rugs to the floor with double-sided tape or nonslip mats.

## Closets and Cabinets

- Store medications, food, clothing and all frequently used items within easy reach; try to avoid using a stool or ladder to retrieve items.
- Use adjustable rods and shelves in closets and cabinets; consider pullout or pull-down shelves and automatic-close drawers.

## Entrance/Exit

- Be sure at least one entry is without steps.
- Support walker/wheelchair access with doorways that are 36 inches wide with offset door hinges.
- Use door handles instead of knobs.
- Test to be sure patio doors and screens easily lock.
- Keep exterior pathways free of holes, loose bricks, uneven pavement, leaves or other tripping/slipping hazards.
- Clear entrances of clutter.
- Be sure doorway thresholds are designed to be non-trip.
- Secure handrails on both sides of all entrance/exit steps.
- Illuminate all exterior pathways, porches and doorways with exterior lighting.
- Add sensors to outdoor light fixtures to automatically turn lights on at dusk and off at dawn and/or turn on when motion is detected.
- Place a bench near the entrance door for placing packages on while locking/unlocking the door and for sitting on when tired.

## Flooring

- Plan for contrast colors between floors and walls.
- Use only nonskid, matte-finish flooring.
- Polish floors with non-glare and non-slippery wax.
- Ensure low-pile carpeting is recessed and set level with the surrounding hard flooring.
- Use textured flooring materials to increase traction; carpeting should be low-pile or low-nap for easier walking or rolling over.
- Secure area rugs with a nonslip mat underneath or recess them to be level with surrounding materials.
- Avoid tiles or natural materials like marble that are slippery, especially when wet.
- Reduce noise with wood and cork flooring.

**60%** of seniors who have made modifications to their homes wanted to increase their ability to live independently\*



## Kitchen

- Equip kitchen cabinets with pullout shelves and a Lazy Susan.
- Add easy-to-grasp cabinet knobs or pulls.
- Make appliances easier to reach; consider a raised dishwasher, a wall oven, refrigerator drawers, and washer and dryer pedestals.
- Replace kitchen cabinets with easier-access drawers and pullout shelves.
- Ensure a seated workspace in the kitchen (use a table, install a pullout work surface or remove lower cabinet doors and shelves).
- Use a step stool with nonslip surfaces and a firm-grip handle.

## Lighting

- Increase incandescent general and specific-task lighting.
- Be sure there are adequate light levels throughout day and night hours.
- Place automatic, light-sensor night lights in the kitchen, bath and other rooms.
- LED lights provide excellent illumination without overtaxing the wiring circuits and are easily dimmable.
- Add additional lighting to staircases and in hallways, either by plugging automatic light-sensor night lights into wall outlets or installing overhead fixtures or wall sconces.
- Use touch-control lamps and devices that automatically turn lights on and off at set times.
- Replace traditional toggle light switches with easier-to-use rocker panel switches.
- Install light switches that glow in the dark.
- Add lighting to closets.
- Use full-spectrum bulbs that simulate daylight.
- Use halogen bulbs to reduce glare.
- Open window shades, blinds and curtains for natural light during the day.

## Seating and Chairs

- Be sure seating is at least 18 inches off the floor.
- Assist with the ease of getting up by using only chairs with sturdy armrests, and ensuring the chair/sofa arms extend to the front of the seat.

**70%** of seniors who have made modifications to their homes did so for safety reasons\*



## Stairs and Steps

- Use nonslip adhesive strips on stairs.
- Be sure safe and secure handrails are on both sides of the stairs and placed at a user-appropriate height and properly secured to the walls.
- Ensure that stairway lights can be turned on and off at both the top and bottom of the stairs.
- Ensure exterior stair treads are in good condition and that there are no weak or missing steps, loose bricks, raised nailheads, open backs, etc.
- See that carpeted steps have a nonslip surface such as adhesive strips.
- Clear all stairs of clutter.
- Choose tightly woven, low-pile carpet with thin padding for steps; be sure patterned carpet is not too busy to affect vision.

Check out Right at Home's Fall Prevention Guide ([rightathome.net/fall-prevention](http://rightathome.net/fall-prevention)) for more detailed information about reducing household-related accidents.

# How We Care for You

If your loved one needs assistance, we offer caregiving services for almost any family and practically every situation. Our bonded/insured care professionals can help keep your loved ones safe at home.

We can:

- Supervise light exercise.
- Assess the environment and suggest modifications.
- Prepare nutritious meals.
- Transport loved ones to medical appointments.
- Provide personal companionship.
- Help with other essentials to ensure the well-being of your senior or disabled adult.

Services we may suggest come from a variety of categories, and include the following:

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## Companionship/Homemaking

Safety supervision, transportation and light housekeeping

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## Physical Assistance

Ambulation and dressing assistance

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## Hygiene

Bathing and other personal care services

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## Wellness

Everyday health reminders, meal planning and meal preparation

We also provide care for very specific special care situations when a loved one is affected by disease or disorders, such as:

- Alzheimer's and Other Dementia
- Hypertension/Stroke Recovery
- Heart Disease
- Cancer Recovery
- Hospice/Palliative Support

Call today for an in-home visit or more information.

**P (877) 697-7537**

[www.rightathome.net](http://www.rightathome.net)



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