

Home adaptations

The complete guide



Introduction

The family home is a precious place, but one that's not always set up to be accessible. If your circumstances have changed since you originally bought your home, whether that's through illness, injury, or disability, you may be finding that your day-to-day life is becoming increasingly difficult. However, it's not always as simple as just moving into a new home.

We've put together this guide, with a little help from our Occupational Therapist, Sharon, offering room by room tips and suggestions on some of the different kinds of adaptations you can try to make your home accessible once more.

Bathroom

The family bathroom is one of the most regularly used rooms in the home, but standard bathroom layouts aren't always set up properly to meet accessibility needs. This can create a variety of challenges, but there are ways to improve accessibility.

Shop bathroom aids.



Smaller adaptations

GRAB RAILS

Grab rails are simple rails that can be fixed to the wall, offering support at key points around the room, such as at the entrance to the shower or above the bath. Grab rails must be fitted correctly to a solid wall. If this isn't possible due your bathroom layout, you may wish to try a different rail, such as the NRS Healthcare Swedish Bath Rail, which fixes to the side of the bath instead.



TAP TURNERS

If turning the taps is becoming an issue, you can replace your existing taps with long lever taps to make it easier to use. An inexpensive alternative is to get tap turners. These useful aids affix to your existing head taps, turning them into long lever taps to give more grip and leverage to turn them. Many tap turners also come colour coded, so you can tell which is the hot tap and which is the cold.



SHOWER BOARDS AND BATH BOARDS

These are boards designed to fit across the top of your existing bath, offering a safe and stable platform to sit on while you get into and out of the bath. Is your shower over your bath? You can also use these boards as a place to rest while you shower. If you do think you would like to use it while you shower, consider if you also need back support. As, if you do, you may need a different type of bathing aid.



TIP FROM SHARON, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST

Reduce your risk of falling by sitting on the side of the bath to enter and exit it, rather than stepping into it.

Medium adaptations

SHOWER SEATS

A shower seat gives you a place to sit and rest while you shower, conserving your energy. Portable shower seats can be moved in and out of the shower as needed, some even have back rests and arm rests. If you're limited on space, you could affix a wall-mounted folding shower seat under the shower head on a solid wall. These will need to be fixed to the wall by a qualified professional.



TOILET FRAMES

A toilet frame can help to make it easier to get on and off the toilet. These frames slot around your existing toilet and give you leverage to help push yourself up or lower yourself down. Some can be fixed to the floor for a truly solid support, but many are portable, so can be moved when not needed. There are frames with a raised toilet seat, to help reduce the distance you have to lower yourself down or stand up again.



BATH LIFT

If you're a fan of a relaxing bath but are finding it difficult to get in and out of the tub, then a bath lift could help. Bath lifts fix to the bottom of your bath and are seats designed to raise up and lower down as needed, so you don't need to try and push yourself up and out of the bath. Bath lifts aren't always suitable for every type of tub, so make sure to check the specifications carefully when choosing one to buy.



TIP FROM SHARON, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST

Fitting a long shower riser rail with a long flexible hose will give you much more flexibility in your shower space.

Larger adaptations

WALK-IN SHOWER

If your bath is gathering dust because it isn't suitable for your needs anymore, you may want to replace it with a walk-in shower. Often, the shower can be installed where your existing bath was, so you won't necessarily need to remodel your bathroom. With a walk-in shower there aren't any doors to open or close, you simply walk in. If you need to use wheeled equipment, ensure your equipment will fit through the entrance. This may also affect whether you need a level access or a low-level access to the shower. Look for a professional installer specialising in bathroom adaptations, to be assured that your needs, and those you care for, are taken into account.



WET ROOM

A wet room is a much larger adaptation undertaking but can future-proof your bathroom, so it remains accessible to the whole family for years to come. Wet rooms are a great option for those with limited mobility or who need to use a wheelchair. A wet room will need fitting by a professional – ideally one familiar with creating adaptive bathrooms, so you can make sure your requirements are being met. Don't forget, if you or someone in your family uses wheeled equipment, keep this in mind as you'll need to ensure there's to move the equipment around without blocking off another part of the room.



TIP FROM SHARON, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST

To make dealing with your personal hygiene easier. Keep your towels and toiletries close by, so you have everything you need to hand before starting.

Bedroom

Bedrooms are meant to be places of relaxation, so we can get a good night's sleep and recover from our day. Depending on your needs or the needs of someone you care for, it may also be the room you spend the most time in. It's crucial to make sure it's accessible for everyone using it.

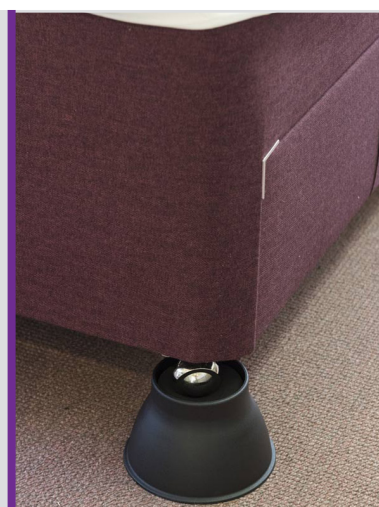
Shop bedroom aids.



Smaller adaptations

FURNITURE RAISERS

If your current bed is starting to feel too low for you, making it difficult for you to stand up from bed when you need to, you may want to consider furniture raisers. These useful aids raise up your furniture to reduce the height you need to push yourself upright or to lower yourself down again. There are bed and chair options, and even some that can be adjustable so you can have your furniture at the right height for your needs.



BED WEDGES

Do you find that your existing pillows just aren't comfortable enough to lean against when sitting up in bed? A bed wedge could help. These useful wedges are designed to help you sit up at a more comfortable angle without having to deal with uncooperative pillows. Some bed wedges can also be used to support your legs as well.



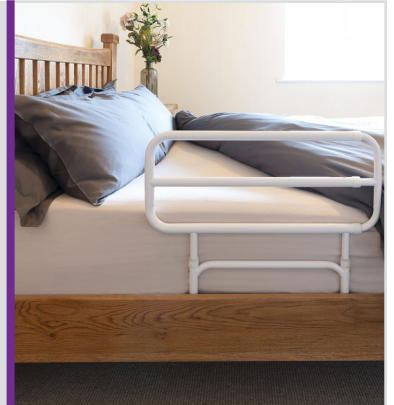
TIP FROM SHARON, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST

There are a variety of different types of furniture raisers available, so be sure to check you've chosen the right set to match your bed.

Medium adaptations

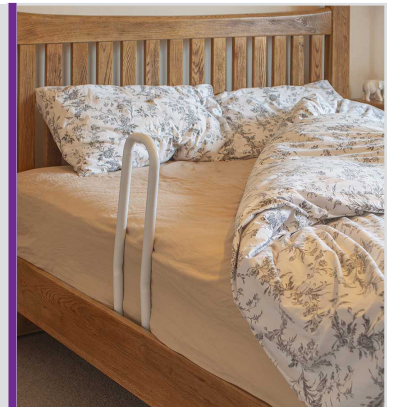
BED GUARDS

Bed guards are there to help reduce your risk of falling out of bed on a night. The type of bed you have will affect which bed guard is more suitable for you. Some bed guards fit under the mattress and some attach to the bed frame itself, so check carefully to make sure it's suitable for your bed before you buy it.



BED RAILS

Bed rails, also known as bed levers or bed sticks, are designed to support you while getting in and out of bed or while moving around in bed. Like bed guards, bed rails either fit underneath the mattress or attach to the bed frame, so again, it's important to double check your chosen bed rail is right for your bed type.



MATTRESSES

Generally, it's a good idea to update your mattress at least every 8 years. Before you buy your next mattress, consider what kind might be good for your needs. If you spend long periods in bed, then you may want to think about investing in a pressure mattress. They're designed to help spread the weight of the body, so the pressure isn't just on specific points and the risk of developing pressure ulcers decreases.



TIP FROM SHARON, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST

It can be easy to get confused about bed guards and bed rails. Remember, bed guards help prevent you from falling out of bed and bed rails help you get in and out of bed. They must not be used for a purpose they haven't been designed for.

Larger adaptations

HOISTS

If transfers to the bed from your wheelchair are becoming difficult, then it may be worth considering a hoist. A hoist can help with safer transfers to and from the bed, reducing stress and strain on everyone involved. Depending on your needs, you could get a mobile hoist that can be moved around as needed or a ceiling hoist, which takes up slightly less space in the room as it hangs down from the ceiling.



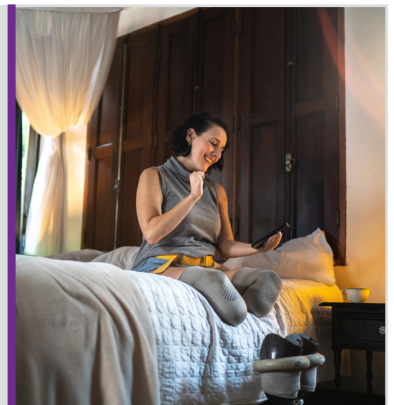
PROFILING BEDS

Profiling beds are designed for those with higher care needs. They can usually be adjusted to different positions e.g. raising the head of the bed or at the knees. Some can be raised or lowered, for carers to take care of the person using it without causing back strain from bending too much. Depending on your needs, you may want to consider one with side rails to prevent the person using it from falling out of bed.



RELOCATE THE BEDROOM

Moving the bedroom to the ground floor could make it much more accessible as you won't have to contend with using the stairs. The first step is to consider which room would be best placed to repurpose as a bedroom. Rebuilding and redesigning unused internal garages is often a popular option for those looking to move downstairs. Other alternatives include using the dining room.



TIP FROM SHARON, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST

Ground floor living may be the answer to staying independent. Is there space for a shower room or a cubical shower/toilet?

Living room

The living room (or lounge or family room, depending on how it's known in your home) is one of the hubs of the home. It's a place where people go to relax, watch TV, and spend time with family or friends, so when it starts to become increasingly inaccessible it can have a big impact on your daily life. But there are things you can try to help make it accessible once more.



Smaller adaptations

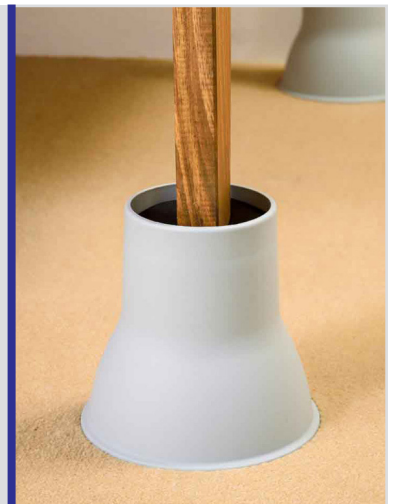
BIG BUTTON TV REMOTES

Modern TV remotes often have a myriad of tiny buttons, which can make them difficult to use if your motor skills or eyesight isn't what it once was. They can also be overwhelming for those with conditions like Alzheimer's Disease or dementia. Luckily, there are universal TV remotes to help with this. These remotes have simplified controls and much larger buttons making them both easier to use and see.



FURNITURE RAISERS

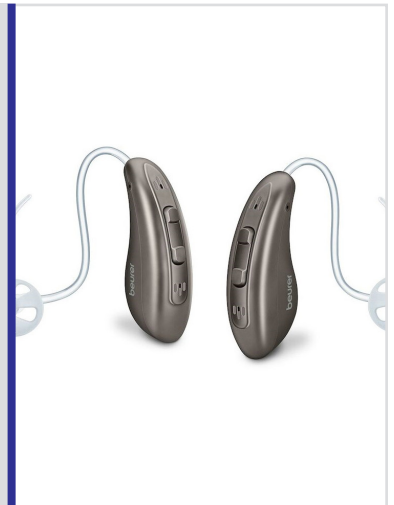
If you're finding it a struggle to get up out of your chair because it's a little bit too low for you, then furniture raisers could help. As the name implies, these handy little aids raise the level of your furniture, so you have less distance to push yourself up or lower yourself down. Furniture raisers come in a variety of different types to fit different kinds of furniture, so be sure to check carefully that it's right for your chair before purchasing.



Medium adaptations

HEARING AMPLIFIERS

Are you struggling to hear the TV without putting up the volume to levels that make others complain? Hearing amplifiers are designed to boost the volume of the world around you, making it a little easier to hear what's going on. You can get different types of hearing amplifier depending on your needs. Some are over the ear headphones that connect to your TV, so you can turn up the volume to a comfortable level for you that won't disturb anyone else. Others not only amplify the volume of your TV but can also be used to help amplify conversations.



PRESSURE CUSHIONS

Sitting or lying down in one position for prolonged periods of time can put a lot of pressure on your skin and underlying tissue. If you spend a lot of time sitting in one chair, then you may want to consider getting a pressure relief cushion. These cushions are specially designed to help spread the weight of your body, so everything isn't just resting on specific pressure points, and can usually fit with your existing chair. There are a variety of different types of cushions available, depending on whether you're at high, medium, or low pressure risk.



TIP FROM SHARON, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST

If you are struggling with your hearing it's important to get this checked out as there could be treatment options available, so be sure to speak with your GP.

Living room

Larger adaptations

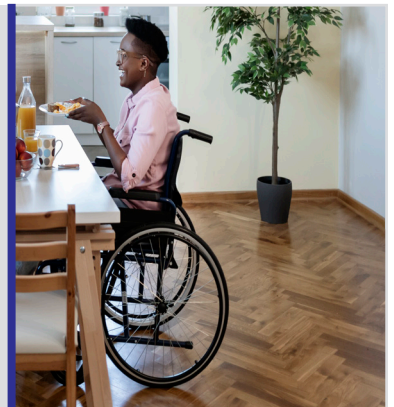
RISE AND RECLINE CHAIRS

Difficulty standing up from sitting? A rise and recline chair could help. These chairs are specially designed to gently raise you from a seated to an almost standing position. If you spend a lot of time sitting down, you may find you're at an increased risk of developing pressure ulcers. Having a rise and recline chair means you can adjust your seating position every so often, taking some of the pressure off.



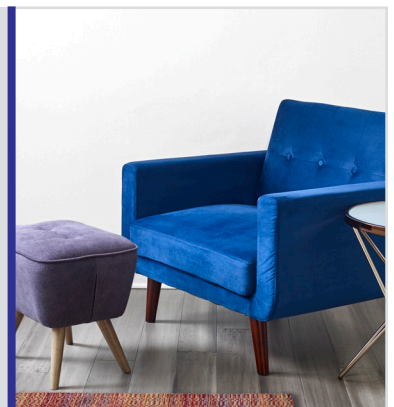
REPLACING YOUR EXISTING FLOORING

A carpeted floor may feel soft underfoot, but it can make getting around difficult. Swapping it for a wooden floor can help to make it much easier to push wheeled mobility aids around the room. If you must use a carpet in the room, then a low pile carpet is usually better.



REARRANGE YOUR FURNITURE

Consider the layout of your living room carefully. Do you need a coffee table, for example, or is it blocking your ability to get around it with a wheeled mobility aid? Perhaps sofas could be moved, or items of furniture removed completely to create larger walkways around the room.



TIP FROM SHARON, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST

I would always advise to remove any mats or rugs as these are hard to manoeuvre over and can cause a trip hazard.

Kitchen

Kitchens are a critical room in the house. It's where we make and share meals, drinks and perhaps even bake the odd treat. They're used multiple times a day for a variety of different reasons, which is why when it starts to become more and more inaccessible, it can have a huge impact on your day-to-day life. There are ways to adapt it to mitigate this.

Shop kitchen aids.



Smaller adaptations

KETTLE TIPPERS

Lifting kettles full of boiling water can be a daunting task if your strength and dexterity isn't what it once was. They can help reduce your risk of spilling boiling water or burning yourself as it removes the need to lift the kettle. Once the kettle is boiled, simply tip it forward to pour out the water into your cup. Some are designed to fit with your existing kettle or ones that come with a kettle.



TAP TURNERS

Tap turners are a cost-effective way to make your taps easier to use without replacing them. They grip on to your existing tap but have longer handles, giving you more leverage when turning them on and off. The type of tap you have will decide if a tap turner is suitable for you.



FOOD PREPARATION AIDS

Are you finding it difficult to prepare food? Food preparation aids are designed to make preparing food much easier, whether you need an adapted kitchen knife with a more ergonomic grip or a food preparation board to hold whatever you're chopping, slicing or peeling in place. If you have limited dexterity in your hands or a weakened grip, these aids could help make cooking a meal less stressful.



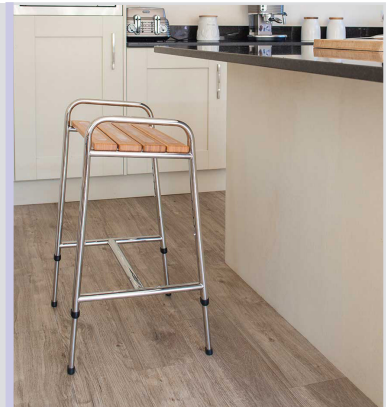
TIP FROM SHARON, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST

To reduce the amount you have to lift you can also try filling your kettle using a jug, so you won't have to carry so much weight.

Medium adaptations

PERCHING STOOLS

Making a drink or preparing a meal can involve a lot of standing around. If you're not as steady on your feet as you once were, then a perching stool could help. Perching stools provide you with a space to rest while you go about your kitchen tasks. Perching stools come in a variety of styles, some come with back supports, so be sure to think carefully about what would benefit you when choosing one.



SLOW COOKERS

Slow cookers are a really useful way to make a delicious, nutritious meal with very little effort, making them a great option for days when you're struggling with low energy. You can also use them to batch cook meals, so you've got a tasty dish to hand on another day.



TEA TROLLEYS

A tea trolley can help to make transferring food and drink from one place to another much easier and safer. They're especially useful if you need a little extra help and support with getting around as you aren't trying to carry everything and walk at the same time.



TIP FROM SHARON, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST

Vegetables can be bought already peeled and chopped and meat can be purchased fully prepared and already diced, so you just need to throw everything into the pot.

Larger adaptations

HEIGHT ADJUSTABLE SINKS

These types of sink are worth considering if you or someone you live with uses a wheelchair or finds it a struggle to reach a standard height sink. It allows you to adjust the height of the sink depending on who's using it, so everyone can use it as needed. If you think this type of sink may be right for you and your family, be sure to find a professional installer who specialises in adaptive kitchens.



LOWER YOUR WORKTOPS

Depending on the layout of your kitchen and who is using it, lowering some or all of your worktops could make it much more accessible. Lowering your worktop can make it much easier to work from and far more accessible for someone in a wheelchair. Removing any cupboards beneath the worktop would also allow extra space for the person's wheelchair while they go about their food/drink preparations.



TIP FROM SHARON, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST

If you're replacing your countertops, opt for something that's easy to clean and maintain. Make sure it has rounded edges too.

Hallways & entrances

It's surprisingly easy to forget about hallways and entrances when it comes to thinking of ways to make your home more accessible. But they're a key area to look at when it comes to making daily life easier.

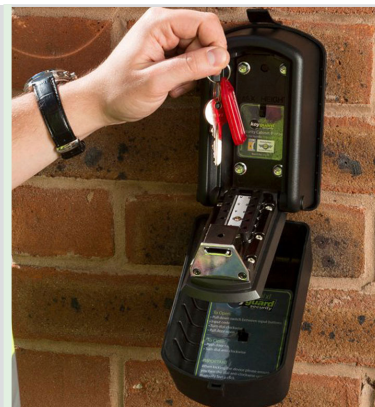


Hallways & entrances

Smaller adaptations

KEY SAFES

If you find it difficult to answer the door but don't feel comfortable leaving it unlocked, then a key safe may be a solution. You can attach a key safe outside your home and leave a house key inside it. It's securely hidden away behind a security code, so only those you trust to know the code will be able to get access.



GRAB RAILS

A grab rail gives you strong, sturdy support when entering or exiting your home. It's important to check that the grab rail you choose is suitable for where you'll be putting it. If you think a grab rail will help but don't like the look of a standard grab rail, some that are more discreet, even having space for a plant pot, giving you unobtrusive help when you need it. Grab rails must be fitted to a solid wall.



HALF STEPS

If your front doorstep is causing you difficulties, a half step may be worth investigating. As the name suggests, a half step is half the height of an average step, reducing the height you need to lift your legs when stepping up into your home. There are half steps available that are adjustable – some with individually adjustable feet so even if the ground is uneven, you'll still have a stable surface to stand on.



TIP FROM SHARON, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST

Placing a grab rail at the doorway will help access your home. Make it about 40cm long next to the door at a comfortable height fixed to a solid wall.

Hallways & entrances

Medium adaptations

MOTION DETECTION LIGHTS

Motion detection lights are incredibly useful lights that shine when you need them, without the need to fumble with switches in the dark. They're especially handy if you're prone to night-time trips to the bathroom and don't want to turn on the main light. Motion detection lights help you spot any obstacles in your path, whether it's an abandoned toy, dropped towel, or even a beloved pet prowling around, so you can avoid tripping over them and potentially causing yourself an injury.



VIDEO DOORBELL

Getting up to answer the door isn't always as simple as it sounds, especially if you have limited mobility. A video doorbell will let you see who's calling without you having to go to the door. It's also a useful way of checking for unwanted callers at the door as with many video doorbells you can both see and speak to them to find out what they want. Some video doorbells need you to download an app on your smartphone in order to use them properly. If this isn't an option for you, look for one that connects using a base unit.



TIP FROM SHARON, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST

Video doorbells, also known as smart doorbells, provide an effective way to keep elderly parents and relatives safer and more secure at home.

Hallways & entrances

Larger adaptations

RAMPS

Steps leading into your home or even steps inside your home can make it tricky to get around. Ramps make it easier to get up small sets of steps, especially when you're using a wheeled mobility aid. There are a variety of different ramps available depending on your need and where they will be used. You may even want to consider a portable ramp you can take with you wherever you go to use as required.



DOOR WIDENING

If your hallways are nice and wide but your doorways are narrow, you may find that you struggle to get through them with a mobility aid. While you can get narrower mobility aids designed to go through tighter spaces, these may not always be appropriate for your needs. Getting your doorframes widened where possible is something that could make a surprisingly amount of difference to the accessibility of your home.



Hallways & entrances

Larger adaptations

STAIRLIFTS

Finding it increasingly difficult to get up and down the stairs in your home? Rather than considering moving to a bungalow, a stairlift may be the answer. Stairlifts help to gently carry you up or down stairs as needed. Most give you a place to sit while moving, but some will allow you to remain standing. There are a variety of different types of stairlift available including those suitable for curved staircases, so it's worth looking around and seeing what's available.



VERTICAL LIFTS

Vertical lifts are designed for use by people with wheelchairs who need to be able to get around on different floors of the house. There are a variety of different designs for these kinds of lift, but whether or not it'll be suitable for your home will depend on the space you have and if a site survey confirms your home is suitable for one.



TIP FROM SHARON, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST

If you are in a wheelchair and need access to upstairs, then you may have to think about more major adaptations and consider a vertical lift if the environment allows.

Our services

EXPERT ADVICE SERVICE

Get expert, impartial product advice from our team of in-house Occupational Therapists and Occupational Therapy Assistants to help you decide if a product is the right fit for your needs.

HOME LIVING CONSULTATION SERVICE

If your loved one is starting to struggle at home, it can be tough to know what to do and how best to help them. An assessment with an Occupational Therapist will help to identify what they can do differently to help maintain their independence for longer, whether that's finding the right daily living aid or advice on different ways they can go about doing the things they want to do.