

The Skills You Need to Age in Place

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, aging in place is “the ability to live in one’s own home and community safely, independently, and comfortably, regardless of age, income, or ability level.” Eighty-eight percent of Americans between 50-80 years old believe that aging in place is important, but many will need assistance to continue to live independently. What abilities must you or your loved ones need to live safely and independently? The healthcare community identifies these activities of daily living (ADLs) as the skills a person needs to care for themselves:

Instrumental ADLs

Managing transportation, either via driving or by organizing other means of transport.

Managing finances: paying bills and managing financial assets.

Shopping and meal preparation.

Housecleaning and home maintenance.

Managing communication with others: telephone, mail, digital correspondence.

Managing medications: obtain medications and take them as directed.

Basic ADLs

The ability to move from one position to another and walk independently.

The ability of a person to feed oneself.

The ability to select appropriate clothes and to put the clothes on.

The ability to bathe and groom oneself and maintain dental hygiene and nail and hair care.

The ability to control bladder and bowel function.

The ability to get to and from the toilet, use it appropriately, and clean oneself.

**This information comes from the National Library of Medicine, retrieved at www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK470404*

People unable to perform some of these ADLs are often able to continue living independently with support. Knowing the areas in which you or your loved one needs assistance makes aging in place more possible, and gives seniors and their family members peace of mind.

If you have concerns about either yourself or a loved one being able to care for themselves, reach out to your doctor or local senior support center for help. They can assess ADLs and recommend interventions to help you and your loved ones age in place safely and confidently.

Sources:

bit.ly/ruralhealthtoolkit

bit.ly/betterhealthwhileaging

bit.ly/healthyagingpool

To learn more about aging in place and explore support and resources, connect with the following resources:

Eldercare Locator
800-677-1116
eldercarelocator@n4a.org
www.eldercare.acl.gov

USAgings
202-872-0888
info@usaging.org
www.usaging.org

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
800-633-4227
877-486-2048 (TTY)
www.cms.gov
www.medicare.gov

Quick Fixes

There are several simple solutions that will make a home safer, more efficient and a better “fit” without having to hire a contractor or invest a lot of money in supplies. In fact, some instant improvements are free!

Make It Safer

- ☐ Place fire extinguishers in accessible locations throughout the home, especially in the kitchen and in any rooms that are far from an exit or have a fireplace or wood stove. (Check the ratings to be sure the extinguishers are appropriate for home use, and keep an eye on the expiration dates.)
- ☐ Install or update smoke and CO detectors. (Many have an expiration date.)
- ☐ Replace throw rugs with cushioned, slip-resistant mats. Or use double-sided carpet tape to secure existing floor coverings.
- ☐ Add adhesive nonslip strips to uncarpeted steps.
- ☐ Gather medications from throughout the home and keep them in a single location. Sort out expired or unneeded medications for safe disposal at a pharmacy or police station. (Remove any personal information from the bottles and boxes or discard the packaging and place the loose pills in a single container or bag.)
- ☐ Install motion-sensor night-lights in hallways and bathrooms, near steps and along staircases.
- ☐ Replace light bulbs that are too dim or too bright with long-lasting, energy-efficient bulbs. (Check the wattage ratings on the light fixtures to avoid installing bulbs that are too powerful.) If a stool or ladder is needed to reach any fixtures, ask someone to serve as a spotter.
- ☐ Store flashlights throughout the home in case of a power outage. Regularly test to check the batteries.
- ☐ Maintain a landline phone, especially in the bedroom and kitchen, and/or carry or keep a cell phone nearby.
- ☐ Keep a fully powered portable charger or power bank on hand so a cell phone, laptop computer or tablet device can be recharged during a power outage.
- ☐ Position and secure electrical and telephone cords along a wall, where they won't be a tripping hazard.
- ☐ Install an address number that will be visible to first responders, especially at night.

Find More Resources
AARP.org/HomeFit

Make It a Better ‘Fit’

- ☐ Determine where deliveries should be left when no one is home. Post instructions at the door or contact the carrier through its website or by calling its customer service number.
- ☐ Locate a bench or table outside the entry door for placing bags when unlocking the door. Also locate a piece of furniture inside for setting down packages and putting shoes on or taking them off.
- ☐ Establish a shoe and slipper storage spot near the entrance door. (Any slippers worn in the house should have nonslip soles.)
- ☐ When extra lighting is needed, add stick-on battery-operated lights to closets, along steps, in hallways and in the kitchen.
- ☐ Place a basket or tote with a handle near stairways for carrying items up and down.
- ☐ Add baskets or bins to areas prone to floor clutter.
- ☐ Rearrange the contents of kitchen cabinets so frequently used items are in easy to reach locations.
- ☐ Add a turntable (available at many housewares stores) to corner cabinets and shelves for efficient storage and easy access.
- ☐ Place a chair next to or inside of clothes closets for use while dressing, disrobing or putting clothing away.
- ☐ Sort, organize and consolidate belongings in order to donate or dispose of items that are no longer needed or wanted.
- ☐ Store reading glasses or a magnifying glass wherever help might be needed for reading small print.

More About Making a Home ‘Fit’

- **AARP Foundation/The Hartford**, AARPFoundation.org/HeretoStay: Download *Here to Stay: Home Upkeep for All*.
- **AARP Public Policy Institute**, AARP.org/LivablePolicy: Search for “Expanding Implementation of Universal Design and Visitability Features in the Housing Stock.”
- **American Occupational Therapy Association**, AOTA.org: Visit the “Patients and Clients” section.
- **National Association of Home Builders**, NAHB.org: Search for Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist, or CAPS.