



## **IS YOUR HOME AGE-FRIENDLY?**

Several people have mentioned Jane Brody's May 2 column in the New York Times, *Aging in Place*. In it, she notes that many people expect to remain in their current homes as they age, but they don't consider whether their home is age-friendly.

It's hard to imagine losing our abilities, but it is likely that we will. Or friends and family who visit our home may face challenges. The good news is that there are many resources available to make your home work for you.

First, do an assessment of your home:

- ◆ Is there a step-free entrance to the home? Is it well-lighted?
- ◆ Are there a bedroom, bathroom and kitchen on the first floor?
- ◆ Are interior doors and hallways at least 36" wide?
- ◆ Is there a kitchen work surface that you can use while seated?
- ◆ Are kitchen cabinets and shelves easy to reach without a stepstool?
- ◆ Do faucets and doors have lever handles?
- ◆ Are there secure handrails on both sides of all stairs?
- ◆ Are stairways and hallways well-lighted?
- ◆ Are exterior walks free of tripping hazards and well lighted?
- ◆ Is the pathway between bed and bathroom free of tripping hazards and well-lighted?
- ◆ Is there a fire extinguisher within reach of the oven/stove?
- ◆ Are there smoke and carbon monoxide detectors on each floor with fresh batteries?
- ◆ Is there an easily accessible telephone on each floor?
- ◆ Is your home number clearly visible from the street (for emergency responders)?
- ◆ Have throw rugs been removed or secured with non-skid material?

- ◆ Are all electrical and phone cords free of fire and tripping hazards?
- ◆ Does the shower have step-free entry, non-skid grips and grab bars?
- ◆ Is the toilet accessible from a wheelchair? Chair height? Grab bars?
- ◆ Is hot water set at or below 120°?

(Questions from AARP HomeFit Guide: [www.aarp.org/livable-communities/info-2014/aarphome-fit-guide-aging-in-place.html](http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/info-2014/aarphome-fit-guide-aging-in-place.html))

Then, make modifications to your home to address the areas that are deficient. Some of these are simple improvements that can be done by a handyman. There are also Certified Aging-In-Place Specialists who can assist with designing and implementing modifications. They are often contractors who have gained this additional certification. Occupational Therapists also have good advice for adapting a home to meet specific needs.

You may realize that your current home is not suitable for aging in place because it cannot meet these criteria even with skilled modification. At this point, some people look for another home in the community where they have many friends, activities and connections. Others consider moving to be nearer to family or into various kinds of retirement communities. Let us know if you would like help reviewing your options.

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