



Home Modifications

The following is an outline of general considerations when making modifications to the home.

Driveway

- **Hard surface driveway** and parking area should be at least 11' wide.
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Entrances

- **Zero threshold entries**, or a threshold that **does not exceed ½" in height**, or a threshold that has a suitable transition ramp installed on both sides.
 - There must be at least one accessible entrance, preferably two **accessible entrances** into the house. Two is ideal so that, in the event a primary entryway is blocked due to fire, there is an alternative exit route.
 - **Ramps** must rise 1 inch for every 1 foot of length (1 inch rise/1 foot run). Ramp should be a non-slip surface.
 - Do it yourself non-slip option: Silicon carbide/carborundum strips or outdoor paint and sand.(Make sure entire ramp is covered.)
 - Guardrails must be 32 inches high and have a nonslip surface.
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Doors

- Doorways must be at least 34-36 inches wide. If extra space is needed, offset hinges allow for an extra 2 inches.
 - Door levers are preferred instead of a door knob. Make sure lever curls toward the door for safety purposes.
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Hallways

- Hallways should be 36 inches wide, but 48 inches is recommended if there are decorations in hall.
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Bathrooms

- **Flooring**
 - Use of smaller tiles can create a non-slip surface.
 - Grout between tiles creates a nonslip surface.

- **Shower**
 - **Towel rods** should not be more than 54 inches from the floor for easy use.
 - Do not use towel rods as grab bars, as they do not provide the support needed and can't handle the weight.
 - Towel rods become dislodged easily, and using these as grab bars can result in serious injury.
 - **Roll-in showers** should be 30 inches wide and 60 inches long.
 - **Slope of floor** should be slanted to properly drain water.
 - Non-slip **grab bars** should be installed on a piece of plywood before applying it to the wall
 - If a **shower chair** is necessary — it should be free-standing or mounted to the wall, or in the form of a shower commode chair.
 - A **hand-held shower head** may enhance accessibility.
 - **Sink**
 - There must be **space under the sink** to allow room for a wheelchair to roll underneath.
 - There must be at least 60 inches of **obstruction-free** floor space in front of sink.
 - **Plumbing** must be appropriately covered (to prevent burns from hot pipes, etc.).
 - To enhance accessibility, **faucets** should have levers and/or electronic sensors that do not require someone to twist the wrist or grasp onto a knob.
 - **Toilets**
 - Standard toilets can be modified with a **raised seat or spacer** installed beneath the base.
 - Toilet seat risers and spacers can be found at most DME providers.
 - Install **safety rails** on both sides of the toilet.
 - **Bidets** can be attached to standard toilet seats (various models).
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Kitchen

- Ensure that 60 inches of **floor space** exists between work counters.
 - Island-style kitchen allows for open feel and greater accessibility.
 - **Wheel-under** kitchen table or countertop with a surface height of no more than 34" and no less than 28" above the floor.
 - Wheel-under sink in kitchen and bathroom, with padded trap pipes and countertop at 30" height.
 - **Counter height** should be 34 inches.
 - Install **pullout counters** and **cutting boards** as needed.
 - Ensure adequate space under the sink and oven to allow enough room for a wheelchair.
 - **Staggered burners** on stove top allows for safer access.
 - Create a 6-inch **kick space** along the bottom of floor cabinets
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Bedrooms

- Using a hospital bed allows for easier transfers in/out of bed for you and your caregiver because the height is adjustable to meet the specific needs of the bed user, as well as the person completing the transfer.
- Make sure there is enough space under the bed to allow for an easy transfer (at minimum there should be enough space for the caregiver's feet; more space is needed to allow for a patient lift to be rolled under the bed).

Interior features

- Hard surface **non-skid flooring** throughout the unit with **no area rugs**. If carpeted, the carpet is **low-pile** commercial grade. If ceramic tiled, grout joints are no more than **3/8" wide**.
- **Furniture placement** that allows for wheelchair access (5' turning)
- **Utility outlets** should not be less than 12 inches from the floor.
- Light and other **switches** should not be higher than 48 inches.

Note: Tile and wood flooring are preferable over carpet.

Funding

- Explore funding through private insurance companies (for durable medical equipment items such as hospital beds, raised commodes, patient lifts, etc.) or a **Medicaid waiver** for home modifications.
- Check with a tax adviser to determine whether any necessary home modifications are tax deductible.
- Seek **alternative funding** through local and national government agencies.
- Contact your local **independent living** center to learn about any grants for home modifications that may be available at the local and state levels.
- **State loan programs** vary from state to state, but they are dedicated to assisting with access to assistive technology devices that promote independence for individuals with disabilities.

Be sure to check with the following:

- State Department of Housing
- State Housing Finance Agency
- State Housing Development Authority
- State Department of Rehabilitation
- State Office of Health and Human Services
- State Treasurer's Office
- State Department of Vocational Rehabilitation
- State Technology Assistance programs

For additional support, please contact the MDA Resource Center at 1-833-ASK-MDA1 (1-833-275-6321) or resourcecenter@mdausa.org.

DISCLAIMER: This document is meant to inform and educate the community. The information presented is not intended to replace discussions with a general contractor or healthcare provider and is not and should not be considered to be medical advice. Please consult with your healthcare team and/or a general contractor for information specific to you.