



One of the biggest fears most people have as they age is a fear of having to leave their home. But if it means more freedom and a better life, then what's the risk? A smaller home will save you money and time. Be sure that new more easily manageable home is enhanced and modified for aging in place, living independently and maintaining the current standard of living. I'll explain.... Whether you're reading this thinking of your loved ones, or yourself in the future, this stuff is good to ponder.

As we age, things around the house that were once easy to negotiate may become more challenging. While most people notice the change in themselves as they age, many neglect to notice the changes that are needed in their home to keep their homes age appropriate. There are many things that you can do to increase safety and make sure that your home fits the increasing needs in your life. Simple home modifications can transform a home into a living space that functions efficiently for all ages and conditions.

A room by room assessment can be completed focused on safety, accessibility and adaptability. Does anything pose a *safety* hazard in the room? Can a senior move around the room and perform tasks safely? Is everything *accessible* to the senior? (yes, being a senior is a good thing! If you don't make it to being a senior....oops! Know what I mean?) Can they reach things and work switches, doors, cabinets, and plugs? Can they perform necessary or desired tasks in this room? Are there things in the room that could be *adapted* so they are easier for the senior to reach or use or so that the senior can get around more easily and safely?

Below are some things that should be considered with easy solutions that can enhance the environment to support continued independent living at home for a longer period of time.

Poor lighting. One way to reduce accidents in the home is to make sure there is proper lighting where it is needed. Outdoor areas, walkways, stairways, kitchen, living room, bathroom, bedroom, hallways; there is no place that won't benefit from better lighting. Rocker type switches can be turned on and off with the touch of an elbow. Use of motion sensed or automatic lights by entry ways, hallways, or bathrooms can also be an option.

Clutter. Things tend to pile up on the stairs, by the door, or on the counters too near (or even on) the stove. Be aware of clutter on shelves and in upper cabinets that can fall and cause injury. Put on your thinking cap and get organized. Install more shelves and cabinets if necessary. Use more labels. And recycle things you aren't using often enough to keep...somebody else will be thrilled.

Throw rugs, extension cords, thresholds. Tripping on a rug, snagging a foot on a table, chair, or cords can cause a fall. Try to get rid of all extension cords or cables strung across walk areas and pare down the amount of furniture or floor items. By modifying the layout of furniture, you can create an environment that's easier to get around – especially if assistance with a cane, walker or wheelchair is necessary. Add some sitting areas down a long hallway, or take away the extra chairs in the living room that make it hard to get around. Thresholds between rooms are difficult to maneuver. Remove these “speedbumps” and replace with low/no thresholds and a potential fall can be averted.

Bath and water hazards. Make sure the water heater is set at 120-degrees or less. Burns from scalding water can be particularly dangerous for those with diabetes who have diminished feeling in their extremities. Place non-skid mats in front of the sink and tub to absorb excess water and prevent falls.

Lower the bathroom sink and making sure there is proper knee clearance (wheelchair accessible). Use a shower seat and/or consider a walk-in or a roll-in shower with multiple showerheads (height adjustable handheld showerhead and fixed). Ensure ample maneuvering clearance for caregiver, walker or wheelchair. Install an elevated toilet seat and grab bars around the toilet and at the tub, Replace faucet knobs in the kitchen and bath with lever-type handles.

Kitchen – cooking and fire hazards. Make sure there is ample maneuvering space. Are towels and oven mitts stored properly? How steady is the hand using the stove, kettle, handling hot food? Does my loved one remember to turn off the stove? Loose clothing can be a fire hazard, too. Candles, space heaters, fireplaces can all be hazardous if someone cannot use them safely. Cabinets and drawer handles should be user-friendly and easy to grasp. Attention to performance is important to decide if a simple adaptation is needed to make a job easier or if it is an unsafe environment

Home Temperature. Your parents might not realize they're overheated, or they might be trying to save on electricity costs. Either way, make sure your elder is not in danger of heat exhaustion or hypothermia-both real concerns.

Outdoor safety. The entry to your home is your connection to the rest of the world. It should be a safe, well-lit, obstacle free and convenient access to your home. Is there a way to open the front door to talk to someone and still be safe? Are the outdoor steps cracked or too large for them to comfortably climb, or have they pulled away from the house? Is there debris in the yard they could trip over?

If you maintain a flower or vegetable garden in your backyard, you may want to consider raising your beds. Raising your beds can help reduce fatigue and stress on your back if bending over for extended periods of time is often difficult.

At **Ezra Home Care** we provide additional support to help keep seniors safe and independent while giving them the ability to go about their daily activities as usual. Perhaps you just need someone to help you with errands, household chores, or tasks that you may find difficult like bathing or dressing, or recent surgery has prevented you from doing normal everyday activities. Home care can be the answer.

So be wise, and Dare to Downsize! 😊

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