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A Room-by-Room Guide to Aging in Place



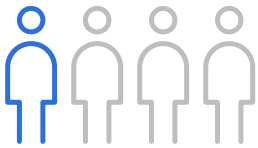
Many people hope to remain in their homes for as long as possible. The challenge is that a home that works well at age 55 may not work nearly as well at age 75 or 85. Stairs, narrow doorways, high bathtub walls, and uneven entryways may not seem like obstacles today, but they can become more difficult to navigate after a fall, injury, or simply as mobility changes over time.

Too often, home modifications don't happen until a health event makes them urgent. Taking a proactive approach can help make the process more manageable, allowing you to spread out costs, make thoughtful improvements, and create a safer, more comfortable living environment before it's needed.

To help get started, we'll look at some of the areas of the home where mobility and safety challenges are most likely to arise, along with simple changes you can make today, moderate upgrades to consider, and larger investments that may help support long-term independence.

What we'll cover:

1. The Bathroom: Staying Safe in a High-Risk Space
2. The Kitchen: Staying Safe During Daily Routines
3. The Bedroom: Making Every Step Count



More than

1 in 4

adults age 65 and older experience a fall each year.

Source: Facts About Older Adult Falls, CDC, 2026

The Bathroom: Staying Safe in a High-Risk Space

The bathroom is one of the highest-risk rooms in the home. Wet floors, hard surfaces, and tight spaces create ideal conditions for falls.

According to the CDC, around 235,000 people visit emergency rooms annually due to bathroom injuries, with adults 65 and older experiencing the highest injury and hospitalization rates of any age group. [1]

Low investments:

- Non-slip mats: Improve traction in and around the shower, helping reduce slip-and-fall risks
- Shower bench/chair: Provides a stable place to sit while bathing, reducing fatigue and balance-related risks
- Handheld shower head: Allows bathing from a seated position, making showers safer and less physically demanding
- Improved lighting: Increases visibility and makes wet surfaces, thresholds, and obstacles easier to see. Think night lights, motion-sensor lights, and high-contrast bulbs

Moderate Investments:

- Reinforce walls for grab bars: Make it easier to add support where extra stability may be needed later (e.g., in the shower, next to toilet)
- Comfort height toilet or raised seat: Reduces effort required to sit down and stand up. A toilet, 17-19 inches from floor to seat is recommended by Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines.[2]
- Lever-handled faucets: Require less grip strength and are easier to operate than traditional knobs

Major Investments:

- Walk-in or curbless shower: Eliminates the need to step over a tub wall, reducing fall risk
- First floor bathroom: Limits the need to navigate stairs and supports single-level living
- Wider doorways: Create easier access for walkers, wheelchairs, and other mobility devices

While the bathroom is often considered the highest-risk room for falls, it's not the only area where age-related changes can create challenges.

The Kitchen: Staying Safe During Daily Routines

The kitchen combines slip, burn, and fire risks with the physical demands of daily meal preparation. Age-related changes in balance, strength, and reaction time can make cooking more challenging and increase the risk of injury.

The National Fire Protection Association has reported that 49% of all home fires annually are from cooking. Adults 65 and older are more than twice as likely to be killed or injured in a cooking fire compared to the general population.[3] This is often due to decreased mobility, sensory changes, and early cognitive issues.

Low Investments:

- Relocate frequently used items: Aim to keep things between waist and shoulder height to reduce reaching, bending, and lifting bulky or heavy items
- Task lighting: Improve visibility around countertops, sinks, and stovetops
- Easy grip cabinet and drawer hardware: Lever-style pulls and handles are easier to use than round knobs for those with arthritis, reduced hand strength, or limited dexterity

Moderate Investments

- Pull-out shelves and drawers: Reduce the need to bend, twist, or reach into deep cabinets
- Touchless faucet: Motion-sensor faucets turn water on and off with a wave of the hand, eliminating the need to grip handles
- Anti-scald/faucet: Helps prevent burn injuries
- Automatic stove shut-offs: Help detect prolonged inactivity at the stove and cut power to the burners. These can be added to most stoves today.

Major Investments:

- Wall oven: Limits bending and reaching over hot surfaces
- Raised dishwasher: Makes loading and unloading easier. ADA guidelines recommend raising the bottom rack so it sits at least 15 inches off the floor.[3]
- Seated prep space: Reduce prolonged standing, making food preparation easier for those with limited strength or mobility

While the kitchen centers on daily tasks, the bedroom presents a different challenge: safely navigating the first and last moments of the day.

Bedroom: Making Every Step Count

Drowsy mornings and nights in your dark bedroom, often cluttered with clothes, shoes, and other personal items, can lead to falls. Age-related changes in vision, balance, and strength can make routine movements like getting dressed or getting out of a soft bed more difficult than you realize.

Low Investments:

- Motion-sensor night lights: Helps create a clear path for you without having to turn on lights
- Secure or remove rugs: Reduces trip hazards and makes using a mobility aid easier
- Clear walking paths: Minimize obstacles between bed and bathroom or other frequently used spaces
- Keep essentials nearby: Limit unnecessary nighttime movement by having glasses, phone, water etc., within easy reach

Moderate Investments:

- Adjust bed height: Makes getting in and out of bed easier
- Supportive mattress: Provides a stable surface that can make repositioning and getting in and out of bed easier
- Bed assist rail: Provides leverage and support when getting in and out of bed

Major Investments:

- Accessible closet design: Adjustable shelving or pull-down rods help reduce reaching when possible
- First floor primary bedroom: Supports single-level living and reduces stair use

"I'm still healthy and active, I don't need to make changes yet"

Planning ahead doesn't necessarily mean making changes before they're needed. It means understanding your options now, while you have more time and flexibility, so your home can continue to support your lifestyle and evolving needs. By thinking ahead, you can make informed decisions on your own timeline rather than feeling pressured to make changes during a stressful life event.



In Summary

If you're thinking about aging in place, start with the areas where daily routines and mobility demands intersect most often. In the bathroom, focus on reducing slip and fall risks. In the kitchen, prioritize accessibility and ease of use. In the bedroom, create a safer environment for getting in and out of bed and navigating at night. Small changes made over time can help your home remain comfortable, functional, and supportive as your needs evolve.

Next Step

Choose one room and consider low, moderate or major improvement to make

[1] Senior Bathroom Falls: What the Data Actually Shows, Aging Care Guide, 2026

[2] 5 Essential Bathroom Safety Modifications for Aging in Place, Daily Caring, 09/2026

[3] Which Rooms in the House Are Most Dangerous for Seniors?, Assisting Hands, 06/2026

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