

How to future-proof your home



Making simple modifications or future-proofing your home can help you maintain your independence and stay in your own home for longer. Future-proofing your home can help to reduce barriers that make it difficult for you to complete daily activities as you age.

Making changes to your home could involve an occupational therapist and a professional tradesperson to make sure the modification is right for you, your body, and your home, while also meeting Australian Standards.



Walkways and entries

- Consider widening entryways when building or renovating your home to accommodate mobility assistive products like a walker or wheelchair.
- Install a doorway lip safety mat to reduce the risk of tripping.
- Consider placing a bench seat or chair near the front door to place heavy items on while locking or unlocking the door.
- Replace hard to grip round doorknobs with lever style alternatives. A easy grip kit is a low-cost alternative to make round doorknobs easier to turn.



On the same level

- Consider moving your bedroom and other rooms you use often to the ground floor.
- Ensure all staircases have a handrail that's easy to grip. Handrail kits can be purchased from most hardware stores.
- Consider carpeting indoor stairs to make climbing them more comfortable.
- Use non-slip tape on slippery surfaces like outdoor stairs.

In the living room

- Ensure there is enough distance between your furniture and walls to create pathways free of obstacles.
- Avoid purchasing furniture with sharp corners. As we age our skin thins and therefore corner knocks can lead to an injury. You can purchase Safety Corner Protectors for existing furniture.
- Avoid using rugs. If you do, use those that are non-slip.
- Use a cord organiser or tape to secure loose cords to reduce the risk of tripping.
- Adjust the legs of furniture to the proper height. Purchase furniture raisers to elevate the height of furniture, particularly for seating and bedding

In the kitchen and laundry

- Install a timer on appliances such as the oven to prevent overcooking meals which is a fire hazard.
- Keep the stovetop and range clear of objects. Ensure that dish towels and curtains are not near burners.
- If possible, move regularly used items to a lower level or install pull-down and pull-out shelves.
- Place anti-slip or anti-fatigue mats to reduce discomfort.
- Use tap turners or replace hard to turn crossbar taps to lever style alternatives.
- Use a universal knob turner to help turn dials on cookers, microwaves, and other appliances.
- Adjust the hot water levels to keep it at a temperature where scalding is not a risk.

In the bathroom

- Install a hand-held adjustable shower head to wash your back and feet.
- Declutter your bathroom products, making sure there is clear access to the basin, shower, bath, and toilet.
- Purchase a shower bench, chair or stool with non-slip feet to help you shower safely.
- When building or renovating your home consider install non-slip tiles in your bathroom with flush flooring. Using a non-slip bath and shower mat is a great low-cost option.
- Install a grab bar or railing to help you move around your bathroom.



Additional considerations

Shower waterproofing

Most bathrooms have a layer of waterproofing beneath the tile to protect your home from water damage. Drilling through this layer may require resealing to prevent damage after the installation is complete. (e.g. a shower grab rail).

Suitable walls and fittings

The types of walls that you have may affect the type of fixing that can be used to fix assistive products like grab rails. It's important to choose the right type of rail with the right type of fitting for your wall or surface so that they don't cause damage and they can withstand the force placed on them when in use.

Type of grab rail

Make sure your grab rails are properly installed and can hold your weight. A towel rail only holds a few kilos and may rotate, so it's not safe to hold onto while navigating your bathroom. Grab rails are widely stocked at hardware stores and come in various materials, shapes, and dimensions, each with a different set of benefits. To make sure you have the right rail, it's best to get professional advice.

Important

Houses built before 1988 might contain asbestos so it's best to find a local tradesperson to consult on your modifications. They'll also be able to help you determine other important things, like whether water outlets are too close to power sockets.

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