

Simple Home Modification for Aging in Place

Fact Sheet

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Introduction

People use the term “aging in place” to mean different things. For some it means you live or stay in the community where you currently reside. Others may use it as a way to explain the benefits of living in an inclusive retirement community. For this lesson, the definition by the National Association of Home Builders will be used. Aging in place is identified as “remaining in one’s home safely, independently, and comfortably, regardless of age, income or ability level.”

What is simple home modification?

Simple home modifications can include adaptation to a home that makes it easier and safer to manage activities of daily living. These changes can include adding or removing simple features of the home with low to moderate cost. They could also be simple purchased items that could make independent living acceptable.

Why make simple home modifications?

There are many benefits to modifying homes to age in place. These benefits would vary depending upon the home’s occupants. To some, the benefits would be cost savings; to others, it would be improved safety. Independence could also be a benefit. Simple modifications will allow people to stay in their homes longer, which also helps people maintain a sense of dignity.

Over the course of their lives, many will experience home environments that no longer help, but rather hinder daily activities. As needs change, so should home environments. Whether temporary or permanent, gradual or sudden, people may find that stairs, tubs, or kitchens have become hard or impossible to use safely. Changes in abilities, regardless of how they occur, do not need to prevent people from living life to its full potential. Basic home modifications and well-designed products can facilitate independent living and privacy.

When a home is modified, it promotes independence. This independence allows the occupant to live a longer, healthier life. This often helps retain the nucleus of the family as well. People like to live where they have familiar items around them. They like to be where memories were made and don’t really want to leave their homes and familiar surroundings.

Safety is another reason to make simple home modifications. By adding a grab bar or removing a few throw rugs, you can decrease the chances of a person falling. According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2000, direct medical costs of falls totaled slightly more than \$19 billion, including \$179 million for fatal falls. This equals \$28.2 billion in 2010 dollars.

Cost can be a significant factor when considering home modifications. Even simple home modifications can range from inexpensive to more costly, depending upon the changes needed. For example, placing a chair at the end of a hallway is simple and inexpensive. Adding a handrail along the length of a hallway is a simple modification that might cost a little more if you need to hire someone to do the work.

References and Resources

Eldercare of Kansas

<http://www.eldercareks.org/>

ElderCare, Inc.

P.O. Box 1364

1819 11th St.

Great Bend, KS 67530-1364

Home Services

620-792-5942

877-792-5942

Friendship Meals

620-792-1241

1-800-530-5068

Kansas Department on Aging:

www.agingkansas.org

Kansas Department on Aging

New England Building

503 S. Kansas Ave.

Topeka, KS 66603-3404

KDOA Telephone Numbers:

•785-296-4986

•1-800-432-3535 (in KS only)

•TTY Number: 785-291-3167

•Fax: 785-296-0256

Email KDOA:

wwwmail@aging.ks.gov

Please include your name, address, and phone number in your email to help KDOA respond to your question.

Public Record Requests:

To request any public record from the Kansas Department on Aging, please call the Freedom of Information Officer at 1-800-432-3535.



The cost of some simple modifications may seem extravagant, but they do not normally add up to the cost of a month of assisted living or nursing home care. According to the 2011 MetLife Market survey of nursing home, assisted living, adult day service and home care cost, the average cost of care has risen significantly. The national average daily rate for a private room in a nursing home rose 4.4 percent, from \$229 in 2010 to \$239 in 2011 (a cost of \$87,235 annually). The national average monthly base rate in an assisted living community rose 5.6 percent, from \$3,293 in 2010 to \$3,477 in 2011 (a cost of \$41,724 annually). The national average daily rate for adult day services rose 4.5 percent, from \$67 in 2010 to \$70 in 2011. The national average hourly rates for home health aides (\$21) and homemakers (\$19) were unchanged from 2010. In Kansas, the average for 2011 also increased.

The charts below show the average cost in Kansas for some care services. These are just average costs and can vary depending on need, location, and services. Understanding these costs will help you determine the value of making simple home modifications.

Table 1: Long-Term Care

Care in Kansas	Nursing Home Semi-Private Room	Nursing Home Private Room	Base Rate for Assisted Living
Average cost	\$143 per day	\$161 per day	\$3,353 per month
Per year	\$52,195	\$58,765	\$40,236

Table 2: Home Health Aid and Adult Day Care

Average Adult Care in Kansas	Home Health Aid	Homemaker	Adult Day Care Service
Cost	\$20 per hour	\$19 per hour	\$81 per day
Cost per week and per year based on an 8-hour day	\$800 per week. \$41,600 per year	\$760 per week. \$39,520 per year	\$405 per week \$21,904 per year

Some simple modifications might only cost you around \$50, while a large-scale bathroom remodel might cost you \$20,000. But both fall well below the average cost of a year in a long-term care facility. If you are unable to cover the cost of these repairs, there might be services available to you for free or reduced rates. There could be other ways to raise capital for your home's repairs and modifications. Reverse mortgages, which allow you to tap into the value of your home, are one of those options. A life settlement on an existing life insurance policy is another. (A financial management professional can help you make an informed decision about these options.)

What types of home modifications are helpful, simple, and cost effective?

Before home modifications can be made, an assessment of the home needs to be taken. The assessment is fairly easy to do, working one room at a time. In each room, ask what adjustments should be made to the room to make the space safer and more accessible. Assessing the rooms individually will keep the task from becoming overwhelming.

Southwest KS Area Agency On Aging:

www.swkaaa.org

SouthWest Kansas Area Agency on

Aging, Inc.

P. O. Box 1636

Dodge City, KS 67801

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/topics/information_for_senior_citizens

U.S. Department of Housing

and Urban Development

451 7th Street S.W.

Washington, DC 20410

Telephone: 202-708-1112

TTY: 202-708-1455

Kansas City Regional Office

400 State Avenue. Room 200

Kansas City, KS 66101-2406

Derrith Watchman-Moore

Regional Administrator 913-551-5462

Fax: 913-551-5469

Email: ks_webmanager@hud.gov

Region VII, Kansas City KS

AbleData

Premier source of assistive technology products

They do not sell products, but can help you locate companies that do.

<http://www.abledata.com/abledata.cfm>

AbleData

8630 Fenton Street, Suite 930

Silver Spring, MD 20910.

Phone: 800-227-0216 or 301-608-8998

Fax: 301-608-8958

TT: 301-608-8912

Email: abledata@macrointernational.com



As rooms are assessed, recognize the less you have in a room, the safer your home environments become. By removing items from the home, a safer, more friendly environment results, allowing one to age in place longer. Here are some items to include in the room assessments:

Kitchen:

- __Rearrange dishes for easier access and less reach.
- __Remove throw rugs.
- __Purchase easy grip utensils.
- __Replace round door handles with lever handles.
- __Replace appliance knobs with easy grab knobs.
- __Change cabinet handles and drawer pulls to types that are easier to grasp and remove magnetic clasps if possible.
- __Turn down the hot water heater to a safe level of 120 degrees or lower.

Living Room

- __Remove all throw rugs.
- __Rearrange furniture to open walk area.
- __Add risers to furniture.
- __Add power strips to raise electrical outlet heights.
- __Remove the clutter.

Bedrooms

- __Raise the bed for ease of use.
- __Change the doorknobs to lever-style handles.
- __Install grab bars near the bed.
- __Remove or add furniture, depending on need.
- __Remove the clutter.

Stairs

- __Remove carpeting to prevent trips and slips.
- __Add extra handrails.
- __Add reflective strips.
- __Increase lighting.

Bathrooms

- __Add grab bars.
- __Only use rugs with rubber backing.

- __Replace fixtures.
- __Add a seat to the shower.
- __Raise the toilet or add a raised seat to the toilet.

Hallways

- __Add more lighting, with a switch at both ends.
- __Add a handrail.
- __Place a chair at the beginning or end of a long hall for resting.

Garages

- __Use reflective tape on edges of garage door openings for better gauging of space.
- __Hang a tennis ball to gauge the stopping spot for your car.

Entryways

- __Replace doorknobs with lever-style handles.
- __Amplify the doorbell to add to a person's safety.
- __Replace old stiff locks with new easy turn styles with large knobs for easy gripping or keyless entry locks.

Outside living areas

- __Build a berm or ramp that is discreet.
- __Add motion detectors at the front and back of homes to light up walk areas and to help with safety of resident and ward off mischief.

Additional changes

- __Add an amplified phone with large buttons.
- __Remove all the unnecessary clutter and get organized. This can prevent falls and increase the safety of the occupant.



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Simple home modification can also help with some primary physical disabilities, including:

- hearing,
- vision,
- sense of touch and dexterity,
- strength and range of motion,
- mobility and agility, and
- balance and coordination.

Cost will vary depending on what modifications you choose to do and where you live. People who live in a more rural area might have a hard time finding someone who could help with the more challenging permanent modifications, but there are options available when permanent solutions cannot be done.

Whether the home requires simple modification or more complex ones, alteration can allow individuals to remain in the home longer, saving them money, making their living environment safer, and giving them more independence.

For more information, on simple home modifications that would be useful for aging in place, contact your local Area Agency on Aging. A directory can be found at the Kansas Area Agencies on Aging Association, www.k4a.org/area-agencies-on-aging/aaa-map. There are also websites where you can purchase items to help, and many items can be bought at your local home health store.

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