



Adaptations for the Kitchen

- The Kitchen is one of the most important rooms in the house. Preparing and eating food is not only recreational, but it is vital for health and independence.
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- Physical access for persons who use wheelchairs:
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- There should be sufficient space to properly navigate a wheelchair. Therefore, the widths of the door openings are crucial. There should generally be at least 32 inches of space to properly enter and exit. Special swing-away hinges can be cheaply installed to increase the free space by as much as 3 inches. If the entrance is accessed from a 90° angle there must be additional room to pivot during the maneuver.
- Floor surfaces should be smooth (i.e. tile) or a short carpet weave. Longer carpet styles and thick padding can make pushing a wheelchair more difficult.
- Plastic guards are available to protect the counters and refrigerator from scratches from wheelchairs.
- Opening a refrigerator from a wheelchair can be difficult unless sufficient space is available next to the handle side of the refrigerator door. If a person must approach the refrigerator from the front, the door will likely strike the foot supports and prevent entry. A person should maneuver their chair next to the refrigerator, open the door, and then move to the center to grab the needed item. Some refrigerators have ice, water and other small compartments that can be accessed from the outside without opening the main door.
- Counter tops and sinks should be approx. 30" off the floor with sufficient space to move a wheelchair into position underneath. If this is not possible, retractable cutting boards can be installed that allow the user to be in a good position for cutting and preparing food. Adjustable tables are available that can be customized for all activities such as working on puzzles, card games, as well as use by all members of the family.
- Counter surfaces immediately next to the stove tops or counter top heating units should be the same height to eliminate the need for lifting heavy pots on and off the burner. They can merely be slid into position - an act requiring much less strength and with a much lower risk of injury.



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- Adjustable height cupboards can be installed to make the contents accessible to all persons. The cupboards are mounted on a track, and can be moved up or down with an electric motor and control unit.
- Considering the arrangement of items in the kitchen area can also be helpful. Place heavy and frequently used items at a convenient height (most often it is lower) and near their place of use.
- A large variety of bags and other carryall type devices are helpful when wheelchair users need to transport items from one area to another. Some attach behind the chair near the user's back, and others enable items to be stored under the seat. They come in a variety of sizes and colors.
- Light switches can be adapted with rod-like extensions to make them accessible from any height.
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- Adaptations for persons with reduced hand function:
- Many persons, due to stroke, arthritis, or other impairments to their hands, require special assistance in the kitchen. Many specialized tools are available to assist them in doing hand oriented tasks.
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- Adapted drawer pulls that have a large C shaped opening allow a user to place his/her hand inside and pull with the wrist. This eliminates the need to grasp drawer knobs with the fingers.
- Lever handle faucets give better leverage and a bigger target for those with weakness or tremors. Adapted knob turners can be added to a conventional knob for the same effect.
- Electric vegetable peelers, enable peeling with only one hand.
- Cooking baskets fit inside a traditional pan, and allows the user to lift only the food portion out when serving. This enables the user to avoid lifting the pan and water during use.
- Specially designed carving utensils have closed handles and contour grips, which make use easier for persons with weak hands.
- Jug tippers allow safe, easy pouring of liquids with only one hand. The jug is placed inside a cradle for easy manipulation.
- A jar holder can be purchased in which jars are placed in a small, easy to use vice. The unit stabilizes the jar to facilitate one-handed opening.
- Special easy-open containers allow the user to prepare food with less strain on the hands and wrists.



- It is possible for persons without use of both arms to feed themselves independently. The user pushes a switch with his or her chin, and a motorized unit moves the food into position for eating.

Personal energy conservation and safety:

Some individuals have limitations in endurance that makes it difficult to prepare an entire meal without rest. The following suggestions will assist persons in making efficient use of their available energy.

- Rounded corners on counter tops and furniture are safer for those who have poor balance and may stumble.
- Persons who are able to walk but have poor balance benefit from wheeled carts or "trolleys." These items allow the user to transport heavy or bulky items around the home with minimal effort. It is a good idea to measure the height of the counter top and match the trolley to it as closely as possible. This will enable the user to merely slide objects back and forth and save a great deal of energy.
- Walkers can be enhanced with bags or trays to free the user's hands during use. It is very dangerous for some persons who are unsteady or at risk for falls to attempt to carry items in their hands while using a walker.
- Adjustable height stools are a good idea for those who stand some of the time but need to rest periodically. A stool is higher than a conventional chair, and requires much less effort to rise from when the work is finished. Some walker designs enable the user to use it as a seat when needed. This frees the user from having to transfer from one device to another.
- Use small and/or electrical appliances to conserve personal energy.
- Use lightweight utensils and tools.
- Avoid bending and stooping – use reachers when possible.
- Arrange work areas so commonly used tools and supplies are easily reached, i.e., a Lazy Susan.

Adaptations for persons with visual impairments:

All persons who use the kitchen will benefit from a well-lit environment. It is especially important that persons with visual impairments have sufficient lighting to work safely.



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- Items with oversize letters such as timers, thermometers, microwaves, and scales can assist persons with mild to moderate visual impairments.
- These same items can be found in designs that also “talk” to the user. They can be particularly beneficial for persons who are blind. A liquid level indicator alerts the user when a cup is full.
- Puffy paint can create 3-dimensional raised surfaces. It can be used to customize materials or add identification marks on any surface. Persons who cannot see may then feel the item for its identification marks.
- Install contrasting counter tops and floor materials. This allows the individual to see the edge of the counter.

Other kitchen aids:

- Anti-scald devices will monitor the water and prevent it from reaching a dangerous temperature.
- Silverware can be coated with a soft, rubbery material to prevent accidental injuries during eating. This is desirable for persons who have reduced sensation in their mouth or have reduced control when biting.
- Some cups have a section removed on the top surface that would normally hit the user’s nose. This adaptation enables persons to tip a cup despite reduced movement in their neck.
- Auto shut-off timers enable burners to be used more safely by persons with memory or attention limitations.
- One-way straws reduce the amount of unwanted air that may be taken in during drinking.

RESOURCES

Accent Information
P.O. Box 700
Bloomington, IL 61702
309/378-2961

Access Foundation
P.O. Box 356
Malverne, NY 11565
516/887-5798

Accessible Systems, Inc.
5596 S. Sycamore
Littleton, CO 80120
303/693-7787
www.accessiblesystems.com

AdaptAbility
P.O. Box 515
Colchester, CT 06415-0515
800/243-9232



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www.adaptability.com

Adaptive Environment Center, Inc.
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Boston, MA 02210
617/695-1225

www.adaptenv.com

ADCO
4242 South Broadway
Englewood, Colorado 80113
303/794-3928
800/726-0851

www.adcohearing.com

American Association of Retired
Persons
601 E Street NW
Washington, DC 20049

www.aarp.org

American Society on Aging
833 Market Street, Suite 511
San Francisco, CA 94103-1824
415/974-9600

www.asaging.org

Amputees in Motion
P.O. Box 2703
Escondido, CA 92033
619/454-9300

www.faimonline.org

The Arc of the United States
1010 Wayne Ave., Suite 650
Silver Spring, MD 20910
301-565-3842

www.thearc.org

Arthritis Foundation
P.O. Box 7669
Atlanta, GA 30357-0669
404/872-7100

www.arthritis.org

Assisted Access, Inc.
P.O. Box 230
Lake Villa, IL 60046-0230
800/950-9655

www.nfss.com

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303/837-8964 TTY
303/837-1208 FAX

www.uchsc.edu/atp

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Western Slope Technical Assistance
Center (WesTAC)
2897 North Ave., Module 3A
Grand Junction, CO 81501
970/248-0876 Main
970/248-0877 FAX/TTY

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Association of Home Appliance
Manufacturers
20 North Wacker Dr.
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202-872-5955

www.aham.org



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Raleigh, NC 27622

919/782-7823

www.design.ncsu.edu/cud

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Manassas, VA 20110

800/582-8732

www.bfl-inc.com

Beyond Sight

5650 S. Windemere

Littleton, CO 80120

303/795-6455

www.beyondsight.com

Brain Injury Association of America,

8201 Greensboro Dr., Suite 611,

McLean, VA 22102

703/761-0750

www.biausa.org

Capabilities, Inc.

6805 W 88th Ave

Westminster, CO 80021

720/214-0339

www.capabilitiesinc.net

Center for Accessible Housing

NCSU School of Design

P.O. Box 8613

Raleigh, NC 27695

919/515-3082

www.design.ncsu.edu/cud

Dr. Leonard's Healthcare

100 Nixon Lane

P.O. Box 7821

Edison, NJ 08818

800/785-0880

www.drleonards.com

Gold Violin

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San Diego, CA 92196

877/648-8465

www.goldviolin.com

Harriet Carter

Dept. 10

North Wales, PA 19455

800/377-7878

www.harrietcarter.com

Home Automation Association

808 17th St. NW, Suite 200

Washington, DC 20006

202/333-8579

www.homeautomation.org

Independent Living Aids, Inc.

27 E. Mall

Plainview, NY 11803

800/537-2118

www.independentliving.com

Information Center for Individuals with Disabilities

Ft. Point Place, 27-43 Wormwood St.

Boston, MA 02210

617/727-5540

LS & S Group, Inc.

P.O. Box 673



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www.lssgroup.com

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Farmingdale, NY 11735

800/522-6294

www.maxiaids.com

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41 W. 8th Avenue

Oshkosh, WI 54906

702/617-3500

www.mileskimball.com

National Assoc. of Home Builders

NAHB Nat'l Research Center

400 Prince Georges Blvd.

Upper Marlboro, MD 20772

301/249-4000

www.nahb.org

National Kitchen & Bath Association

687 Willow Grove St.

Hackettstown, NJ 07840

800/843-6522

www.nkba.com

North Coast Medical, Inc.

18305 Sutter Blvd.

Morgan Hill, CA 95037-2845

www.ncmedical.com

PAM Assistance Center

601 W. Maple

Lansing, MI 48906

800/274-7426

Paralyzed Veterans of America

Information Specialist

801 18th St. NW

Washington, DC 20006

202/416-7710

www.pvaorg.com

Post-Polio Health International (PHI)

4207 Lindell Boulevard, #110

Saint Louis, Missouri 63108-2915

USA

314-534-0475

www.post-polio.org

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P.O. Box 5071

Bolingbrook, IL 60040-5071

800/323-5547

www.sammonspreston.com

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Thornton, CO 80229

303/892-6000

www.stayactiveshoppes.com

Walter Drake

20 Drake Building

Colorado Springs, CO 80915

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www.wdrake.com



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www.whirlpool.com

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