



# Adaptations for the Living Room

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Many useful assistive devices and adaptations are possible in the living room of one's home. These products can help people to live more productively and independently, and can potentially allow one to remain at home and to avoid institutionalization.

## **For persons who use wheelchairs:**

A disability can sometimes prevent a person from freely entering, moving about, and exiting their homes. Good planning and the proper application of technology can maximize independence and quality of life for all persons.

- 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.
- To make the transition from room to room easier, smooth out the bumps by removing the metal plates or other obstacles under doorways, or use a small ramp.
- The carpeting should be short, as heavy shag-type carpets require extra effort for wheelchair users. Thick padding under carpet can also make movement in a wheelchair more difficult.
- Windows should be low enough to allow wheelchair users to see outside. Casement style allows windows to be independently opened and closed from the wheelchair position.
- Light switches and Venetian blinds can be adapted with rod-like extensions to make them accessible from any height (i.e. wheelchair height).

## **Environmental control units:**

Environmental control units, also known as Electronic Aids to Daily Living (EADLs), allow many persons to independently control their environment. These include such areas as room temperature, lighting, TV, stereo, etc. Persons who lack the mobility to turn switches, open and close curtains, adjust the temperature, etc. in conventional ways may do so with special remote control



units. These units operate much as a typical TV remote does, except these units control many other crucial functions of the home as well.

- The units can be operated in many ways (depending on the user's abilities). These include conventional buttons, voice activation, using a switch or joystick, or via a computer or communication device. Some communication devices such as the DynaVox have built-in EADL capabilities, and allow full use in this area for little or no extra cost.
- For persons with impaired hand function, reaching high into lamps and fumbling with small switches can be difficult. Lamps can be easily modified to operate merely by touching the metal base.

### **For those who walk, but have difficulty:**

- Many persons who have hip injuries or general weakness find it especially difficult to rise up from a sitting position. Devices such as the "Uplift Seat Assist" will lift a person from a sitting position to a nearly standing position with minimal effort by the individual.
- Falls are the single biggest safety threat in the home. Bathrooms are not the only rooms in the house that require grab bars to reduce the risk of falls. Many frequently traveled stairways, hallways, and living rooms benefit from them as well. Remember that the bar should be mounted securely into wall studs, and should be 1-½ inches from the wall to prevent a person's arm from getting stuck inside.
- Slipping on small, loose rugs is a common cause of falls in the home. All small rugs should be removed or secured to the underlying surface with carpet tape.

### **For persons with visual impairments:**

All persons who use the home will benefit from a well-lit environment. It is especially important that persons with visual impairments have sufficient lighting to avoid falls and move about the home safely. Light switches should be accessible (i.e. the proper height and near the entrance to the room) to enable *all* persons to use them.

- Many small, hand-held magnifiers are available to persons who have special visual needs.



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- Closed circuit televisions, or CCTVs, will enlarge written materials (i.e. the newspaper) for persons with reduced vision. Some of these devices have tracking features, which will automatically move back to pre-determined positions to assist readers in tracking their locations on the page.
- Many other products use raised letter or enlarged markings. Clocks, video remotes, telephone keypads, thermometers, and many other products can be adapted in this way.
- Some of these same electronic devices also “talk” to the user (i.e. a calendar that “tells” the user the date and time of day).
- Telephones and phone dialers are available which “speak” to the user and understand the user’s voice. This enables persons who cannot dial or look up numbers in the conventional manner to use the telephone (and other similar products) independently.

### **For persons with impaired hand function:**

- Special adapted windows or window controls can be built to open with minimum hand strength.
- Playing card holders assist those who have difficulty grasping and holding cards.
- Special devices can stabilize a knitting or crocheting project so persons who have the use of only one arm can continue this relaxing hobby.
- Board games such as checkers or chess can be adapted by placing loops on the pieces to enable easy grasp.
- Persons who enjoy crafts have the options of adapted scissors, writing pens, paint brushes, etc. Nearly any implement can be adapted by building up the handle, using straps to attach it more securely to a body part, or other modification.
- Drawers and cupboards can be easily opened with adapted handles. These devices have extra large openings that enable a person to insert their wrist inside. The drawer can then be opened with the larger muscles of the arm instead of the fingers. Also, special adapted tools can fit into conventional drawer pulls to enable use.

### **RESOURCES**

AAA Medical

9197 West 6th Ave, Suite 1000  
Lakewood, CO 80215  
303/781-1474



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800/525-8586

[www.aaamedical.com](http://www.aaamedical.com)

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](http://www.accessiblesystems.com)

AdaptAbility

P.O. Box 515

Colchester, CT 06415-0515

800/243-9232

[www.adaptability.com](http://www.adaptability.com)

Adaptive Environment Center, Inc.

374 Congress St., Suite 301

Boston, MA 02210

617/695-1225

[www.adaptenv.com](http://www.adaptenv.com)

ADCO

4242 South Broadway

Englewood, Colorado 80113

303/794-3928

800/726-0851

[www.adcohearing.com](http://www.adcohearing.com)

American Association of Retired  
Persons

601 E Street NW

Washington, DC 20049

[www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org)

American Society on Aging

833 Market Street, Suite 511

San Francisco, CA 94103-1824

415/974-9600

[www.asaging.org](http://www.asaging.org)

Amputees in Motion

P.O. Box 2703

Escondido, CA 92033

619/454-9300

[www.faimonline.org](http://www.faimonline.org)

The Arc of the United States

1010 Wayne Ave., Suite 650

Silver Spring, MD 20910

301-565-3842

[www.thearc.org](http://www.thearc.org)

Arthritis Foundation

P.O. Box 7669

Atlanta, GA 30357-0669

404/872-7100

[www.arthritis.org](http://www.arthritis.org)

Assisted Access, Inc.

P.O. Box 230

Lake Villa, IL 60046-0230

800/950-9655

[www.nfss.com](http://www.nfss.com)

Assistive Technology Partners

601 E. 18th Ave., Suite 130



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800/255-3477 within Colorado  
303/837-8964 TTY  
303/837-1208 FAX  
[www.uchsc.edu/atp](http://www.uchsc.edu/atp)

Assistive Technology Partners  
Western Slope Technical Assistance  
Center (WestAC)  
2897 North Ave., Module 3A  
Grand Junction, CO 81501  
970/248-0876 Main  
970/248-0877 FAX/TTY  
[www.uchsc.edu/atp](http://www.uchsc.edu/atp)

Association of Home Appliance  
Manufacturers  
20 North Wacker Dr.  
Chicago, IL 60606  
202-872-5955  
[www.aham.org](http://www.aham.org)

Barrier Free Environments  
P.O. Box 30634  
Raleigh, NC 27622  
919/782-7823  
[www.design.ncsu.edu/cud](http://www.design.ncsu.edu/cud)

Barrier Free Lifts  
9230 Prince William St.  
Manassas, VA 20110  
800/582-8732  
[www.bfl-inc.com](http://www.bfl-inc.com)

Beyond Sight  
5650 S. Windemere  
Littleton, CO 80120

303/795-6455  
[www.beyondsight.com](http://www.beyondsight.com)

Brain Injury Association of America,  
8201 Greensboro Dr., Suite 611,  
McLean, VA 22102  
703/761-0750  
[www.biausa.org](http://www.biausa.org)

Capabilities, Inc.  
6805 W 88th Ave  
Westminster, CO 80021  
720/214-0339  
[www.capabilitiesinc.net](http://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](http://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](http://www.drleonards.com)

Gold Violin  
P.O. Box 261639  
San Diego, CA 92196  
877/648-8465  
[www.goldviolin.com](http://www.goldviolin.com)

Harriet Carter  
Dept. 10  
North Wales, PA 19455



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800/377-7878

[www.harrietcarter.com](http://www.harrietcarter.com)

Home Automation Association

808 17<sup>th</sup> St. NW, Suite 200

Washington, DC 20006

202/333-8579

[www.homeautomation.org](http://www.homeautomation.org)

Independent Living Aids, Inc.

27 E. Mall

Plainview, NY 11803

800/537-2118

[www.independentliving.com](http://www.independentliving.com)

Information Center for Individuals  
with Disabilities

Ft. Point Place, 27-43 Wormwood St.

Boston, MA 02210

617/727-5540

[www.disability.net](http://www.disability.net)

Jensen Medical

1900 S. Quince St.

Denver, CO 80231

303/751-7282

LS & S Group, Inc.

P.O. Box 673

Northbrook, IL 60065

800/468-4789

[www.lssgroup.com](http://www.lssgroup.com)

Maxi Aids

P.O. Box 3209

Farmingdale, NY 11735

800/522-6294

[www.maxiaids.com](http://www.maxiaids.com)

Medical Home Supply

111 W. Evans Ave., #1

Denver, CO 80223

303/762-1263

800/873-8385

Miles Kimball

41 W. 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue

Oshkosh, WI 54906

702/617-3500

[www.mileskimball.com](http://www.mileskimball.com)

Mountain View Medical Supply

5370 Sheridan Blvd.

Arvada, CO 80002

303/455-1300

[www.mvms.com](http://www.mvms.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](http://www.nahb.org)

National Kitchen & Bath Association

687 Willow Grove St.

Hackettstown, NJ 07840

800/843-6522

[www.nkba.com](http://www.nkba.com)

North Coast Medical, Inc.

18305 Sutter Blvd.

Morgan Hill, CA 95037-2845

[www.ncmedical.com](http://www.ncmedical.com)

PAM Assistance Center



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601 W. Maple  
Lansing, MI 48906  
800/274-7426

Paralyzed Veterans of America  
Information Specialist  
801 18<sup>th</sup> St. NW  
Washington, DC 20006  
202/416-7710  
[www.pvaorg.com](http://www.pvaorg.com)

Pathways HomeCare Center  
11091 E. Mississippi Ave.  
Aurora, CO 80010  
303/365-2100  
[www.pathwayshomecare.org](http://www.pathwayshomecare.org)

Pathways HomeCare Center  
1500 West Littleton Blvd., Unit #127  
Littleton, CO 80120  
303-798-5588  
[www.pathwayshomecare.org](http://www.pathwayshomecare.org)

Post-Polio Health International (PHI)  
4207 Lindell Boulevard, #110  
Saint Louis, Missouri 63108-2915  
USA  
314-534-0475  
[www.post-polio.org](http://www.post-polio.org)

Roth Medical  
5345 Arapahoe, #1  
Boulder, CO 80303  
303/442-2116

Sammons Preston  
P.O. Box 5071

Bolingbrook, IL 60040-5071  
800/323-5547  
[www.sammonspreston.com](http://www.sammonspreston.com)

Walter Drake  
20 Drake Building  
Colorado Springs, CO 80915  
800/525-9291  
[www.wdrake.com](http://www.wdrake.com)

StayACTIVE Shoppes  
550 E. Thornton Pkwy, #212  
Thornton, CO 80229  
303/892-6000  
[www.stayactiveshoppes.com](http://www.stayactiveshoppes.com)



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Whirlpool Corp. Appliance  
Information Service #4300  
Benton Harbor, MI 49022  
800/253-1301  
[www.whirlpool.com](http://www.whirlpool.com)

Youcan Toocan

2223 S. Monaco Pkwy.  
Denver, CO 80222  
888/663-9396  
303/759-9525  
[www.youcantoocan.com](http://www.youcantoocan.com)

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