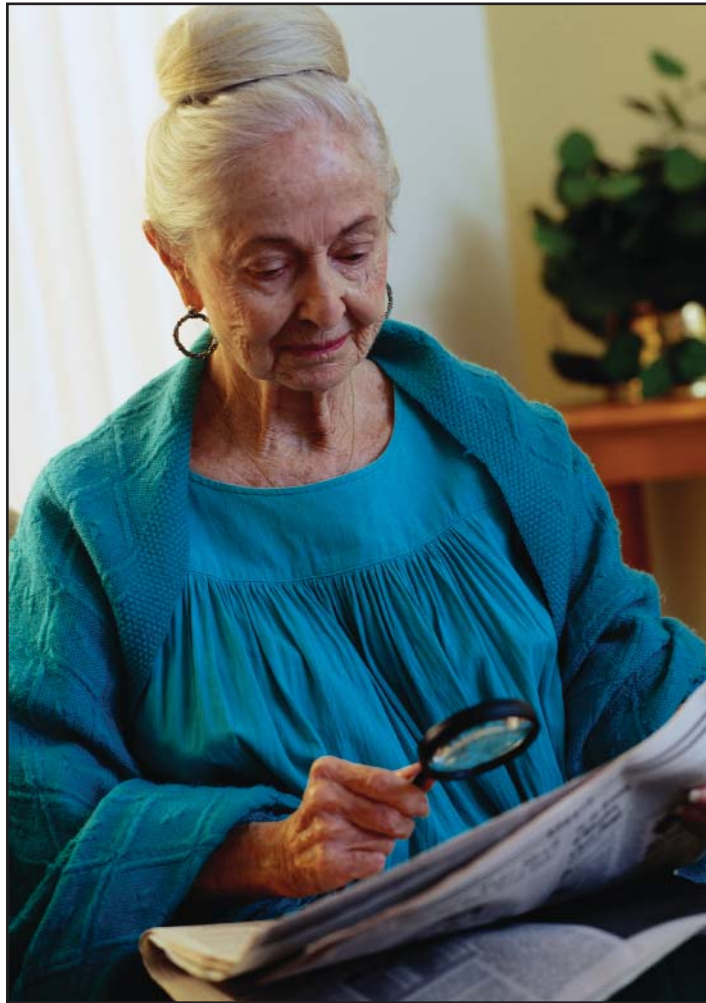




IFAS EXTENSION

Adapting the Home¹

Pat J. Dasler²



Aging in the 21st Century

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, by the year 2050 the nation's elderly population will more than double to 80 million, and the more frail, over-85 population will quadruple to 18 million.

Currently, Florida ranks first in the United States in the percent of the population that is full-time and seasonal residents over the age of 65. Older Floridians, their families and communities face a myriad of issues related to aging.

Aging in the 21st Century is an eight-topic program that addresses issues such as:

- health and medical care
- family relationships
- economic concerns
- caregiving
- home modifications
- retirement
- nutrition and diet

Institute on Aging core faculty from the Colleges of Medicine, Nursing, Health Professions, and Liberal Arts and Sciences joined Extension faculty from IFAS as educators for this series.

1. This document is FCS2215/FY630, one of a series of publications from the distance education in-service "Aging in the 21st Century," coordinated by Carolyn Wilken, PhD, MPH, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, UF/IFAS. First published: September 2003. Reviewed by Candice King, formerly coordinator of Research Programs, Institute on Aging. University of Florida, Gainesville, 32611.

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WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

- **AARP's 9 BASIC IDEAS:** How to increase home safety
- **INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT:** How to individualize the solutions to each person or activity
- **Universal Design:** What it is and how it can be used to make the home more safe and user friendly
- **ASSISTIVE DEVICES:** What are available and how to locate them

AARP's Basic Ideas to Increase Home Safety

AARP offers nine basic ideas for home modifications. These tips will help people age in place by making changes in the home. People of all ages and ability levels can use these suggestions. Below are AARP's tips:

1. Install **night lights** in hallways and bathrooms



2. Replace **light bulbs** with higher wattage
3. Install an **emergency response system**
4. Replace door knobs with **lever handles**

5. Replace faucet knobs with **faucet handles**



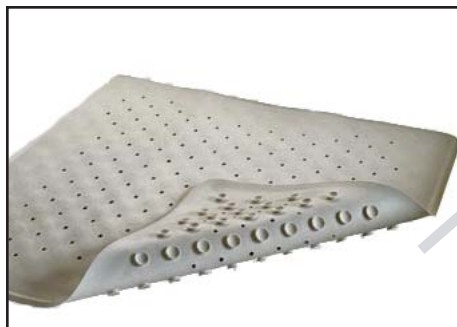
6. Replace your phone with one that has **larger numbers**



7. Install **non-slip strips** on stairs

8. Use **double sided tape** to secure carpets or rugs

9. Place **non-skid strips** or mats in bathtub or shower



Individual Assessment

When assessing the need to purchase an assistive device or to make home modifications, it is important to first identify your specific needs. Below are some important questions to ask yourself:

- What activities do I want to do?
- What do I want to do that I cannot do now?
- What activities am I doing which are causing pain, discomfort or some type of risk?
- How can my home be adapted so I can do the things I want with the greatest independence, safety and satisfaction now and in the future?

Once you answer these questions, it will be easier to decide what home modifications are needed now or may be needed in the future.

The next section will give you a better idea of the devices that are available. You will also learn how universal design and home modifications can benefit your life.



REMEMBER:

Install and secure suction-cup mats before turning on the water.

Assistive Devices

There are numerous devices on the market today. There are products designed for:

- weak or painful grip
- limited use of arms
- low vision or poor hearing
- problems with standing or walking

Sure you can live without these devices, you already are. But research shows that people who use them:

- have **less pain**,
- are **more active**, and
- spend **fewer days in the hospital**.

The best way to find out about some of these devices is to go to

your local medical supply store for guidance. If you are unable to go to the store, you can use catalogues to make your choices or shop on the Internet. For catalogs *North Coast* and *Sammons* consumer catalogs are good places to start. *Dynamic Living* is a good Web site to check. You can use the search function by typing things such as: *assistive devices bathing*.

When it comes to product selection one kind does not suit all. Each device might have many different models. So, it is important that you inform yourself, and choose which is right for you depending on your level of ability.

There are many kinds of devices for all rooms of the house

and all kinds of activities. Once you spot an item you find useful, shop around through catalogs or web sites to find the right design for you at the best price.

If all this shopping is not for you, ask a family member to look or call a local medical supply store for help.



Assistive Listening Device

Universal Design

Universal design means creating products and environments for everyone regardless of age or ability.

The intent is to minimize barriers that standard designs create, eliminating the need for home modification as abilities change.

Here are a few universal design ideas:

- **Ramps built into the home design:**



- **Throughout Home:**

1. Lever handled doors
2. Rocker type light switches

- **Kitchen:**

1. Drop down shelves
2. Adjustable height kitchen sink
3. Roll-out shelves
4. Built in oven with side opening



- **Bathroom:**

1. Bathroom vanity with swing away doors
2. Toilevator and elevated seat
3. No threshold showers
4. Grab bars
5. Non-slip surfaces in tub/shower

HOW TO GET IT DONE

1. **Do It Yourself**
2. **Community agencies and faith-based groups**
3. **Contractors**
(Most need consultation to insure a good result)
4. **Elder Independence Service** - (352) 273-6127

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR ASSISTIVE DEVICES

The Lighthouse, Inc.

(low vision)
36-20 Northern Boulevard
Long Island City, NY 11101
1-800-829-0500
1-718-786-5620 (fax)
www.lighthouse.org

Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center on Technology for Successful Aging

1-352-273-7127
www.rerc.ufl.edu

Sammons-Preston

P.O. Box 5071
Bolingbrook, IL 60440-5071
1-800-323-5547
1-800-547-4333 (fax)
www.sammonspreston.com

North Coast Medical

18305 Sutter Boulevard
Morgan Hill, CA 95037-2845
1-800-821-9319
1-877-213-9300 (fax)
www.blvd.com/northcoa.htm

Can-Do Products

Independent Living Aids, Inc.

27 East Mall
Plainview, NY 11803
1-800-537-2118
1-516-752-3135 (fax)
www.independentliving.com

Hard-To-Find Tools

Brookstone Company

Corporate Headquarters
17 Riverside Street
Nashua, NY 03062
1-800-926-7000
www.brookstone.com

Mail Order Medical Supply

25230 Avenue Stanford
Valencia, CA 91355
1-800-232-7443
1-800-622-3429 (fax)
www.momscatalog.com

Dynamic Living

428 Hayden Station Road
Windsor, CT 06095-1302
1-888-940-0605
1-860-683-2694 (fax)
www.dynamic-living.com

Threshold ramps

Van Duerr Industries
1-800-497-2003
www.vanduerr.com

WingIts

For installation of grab bars, etc
Without studs or blocking
1-877 894-6448
www.wingits.com

RAPCO Inc.

Non-electric door opener
(Door Butler)
1-877-338-4464
www.doorbutler.com

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All products should be used in accordance with directions on the manufacturer's label.

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- ***Financial Issues***
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- ***Elder Nutrition***
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- ***Fall Prevention***
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- ***Family Relationships in an Aging Society***
Terry Mills, PhD
- ***Developing Educational Programs for Older Adults***
Carolyn Wilken, PhD, MPH
- ***Adapting the Home***
Pat Dasler, MA, OTR/L

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REFERENCES:

1. AARP National Survey, May 2000.
2. Mann, W. C. et al (1999) *Effectiveness of Assistive Technology and Environmental Interventions in Maintaining Independence and Reducing Home Care Costs for the Frail Elderly*. Arch Fam Med Vol 8 May/June