

# Bathroom modifications



## Tip sheet

Bathroom modifications are the most common need in the design of a safe and functional space. They may be required due to accessibility or safety concerns.

### Accessibility:

**Size:** A bathroom must be large enough to comfortably accommodate the needs of the individual. A standard accessible bathroom should allow for a turning radius of a standard sized wheelchair of 5 feet with at least a 32" pathway.

**Shower:** Decide between a tub or a shower. A stand-alone shower is easiest for those who use a wheelchair. This will allow for a shower wheelchair or a bench to be installed within the shower itself.

- Make sure there is roll-in access to the shower or room for a transfer bench if using a tub.
- Consider selecting a shower kit with doorless entry and without an enclosure.
- Consider installing a sloping drain for easy and quick water drainage.
- Consider installing a hand-held showerhead and/or a sliding shower head bar.
- Add grab bars as needed for support.

### Outlets and lighting:

- Electrical outlets should be a minimum of 18" from the floor.
- Counter top outlets should be no deeper than 21" from the edge of the countertop.
- Install motion-sensor lighting or voice activated light fixtures.

### Countertops and sinks:

- For wheelchair users – 30-32" in height.
- For those who stand – 34-36" in height.
- Allow clearance space underneath the countertop and sink for those who use a wheelchair.
- Ensure taps and drains are accessible from a seated position.

### Flooring:

- Vinyl or ceramic materials are best for wheelchair users.
- Note: Grouted crevices in ceramic tile may cause a bumpy ride for wheelchair users.
- Cork floors are good for those with fall considerations, but difficult to maneuver a wheelchair on.
- Avoid using rugs or bath mats that stay down on the floor.
- Consider a drain within the floor for easy drainage and clean up.

#### Grab bars:

- Safety poles and grab bars should be installed where needed.
- Install at all locations where transition from sitting to standing occurs.

#### Doors:

- 32-36" wide for wheelchairs and/or walkers to easily move through.
- A pocket door may create more space.
- Consider spring-clear hinges to allow the swing of the door outward rather than inward.

#### Toilet:

- Toilet height should be 17-18" .
- Consider a raised toilet seat if needed.
- A wall-hung toilet allows more floor space for wheelchair maneuverability.
- Consider a personal bidet to assist with hygiene.

Consider a professional consultation on how to make your bathroom accessible.

Video Tours of Accessible Bathrooms: [www.disabledbathrooms.org/accessible-bathrooms.html](http://www.disabledbathrooms.org/accessible-bathrooms.html)

#### Safety:

Safety issues can be presented not only due to mobility concerns, but also behavioral or sensory concerns. Consider these items in your planning:

#### Space:

- Does there need to be an assistant in the washroom with the individual?
- Does the individual become defensive when in cramped spaces?
- Is sensory overload a concern?

#### Safety:

- Scald prevention: There are products that will cut the water flow to a trickle if it goes beyond a certain temperature.
- Slip and falls: Grab bars and safety poles can be installed where transitions from seating to standing take place.
- Electrical: ensure ground fault interrupters (GFI) are installed in all bathroom outlets.
- Install non-slip flooring (some flooring becomes incredibly slippery when wet).
- Glass and mirrors: consider safety glass to avoid breakage.

#### Durability :

- Consider commercial grade flooring and fixtures.
- Anchor grab bars securely if you anticipate heavy use of them (add extra wood behind them prior to install).

**Braddock, George, and John Rowell. Making Homes That Work: Planning, Design and Construction of Person-Centered Environments for Families Living with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Inclusion Press, 2013.**