



# Top Tips for a more Comfortable Home

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This factsheet will give an overview of the grants available for adapting your home and a step by step guide for what adaptations you can think of.

Whether you need to make changes to your home now or are just thinking about the future, or are moving house it's good to know what kind of changes you could make.

**Home adaptations can enhance the simplicity and safety of everyday routines such as cooking & cleaning.**

The primary reason people with OI make changes to their home is to make it safer and easier to move around in. Home adaptations can enhance the simplicity and safety of everyday routines such as cooking, cleaning, climbing stairs and using the toilet, providing a valuable boost to independence and confidence.

You may be entitled to a grant to cover the costs of any equipment or work you need carried out in your home. Contact your local council and ask for an assessment of your home. Small items or works maybe covered by a minor works grant. Larger and more costly changes are covered by Disabled facilities grants. There is often a waiting list for both of these services.



Please note not all suggestions in this leaflet will not necessarily be funded by your local authority. The different local authorities set their own funding criteria. This leaflet is meant purely as a guide for consideration and has been created in conjunction with a working group of individuals with OI, we have included comments from the Independent Living Survey and it has been approved by Paediatric OI National Team and Medical Advisory Board.

## Types of Grants

These sometimes differ by the country you live in and are listed below .

### Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs).

Available from local councils in England, Northern Ireland and Wales are awarded where works are considered essential to enable better access and movement at home or to make it safe for a disabled occupant. A DFG can help with the cost of, for example:

- Getting up and down the stairs.
- Entering and leaving your home
- Using the cooking area
- Accessing some of the garden area

They do not affect any other benefit you are already entitled to.



### The Scheme of Assistance

In Scotland - 'mandatory grants' are available to home owners and private tenants. These are awarded for work regarded as essential to meet the needs of a disabled person. The Scottish government has also produced a range of guides with further information about adaptations

### Housing Adaptation Grants

These are available from your local authority if you live in Ireland.

### VAT Relief

If you're having building work done to your home related to your disability you should discuss VAT relief works with the builder.



## How your Home can be Adapted

Here are some of the ways, both big and small, in which homes can be adapted:

### External Adaptations

- Install a handrail or ramp if there are steps up to your front or back door.
- Think about adding an outdoor light to help you make your way inside when it's dark.
- Automatic door entry through a garage and into main house.
- Speak to your local authority about dropped kerbs and easy access parking.
- Resurfacing your garden, widen the paths, use raised planting beds.

## Internal Adaptations

### Answering the Door

If it's difficult to get to the front door, think about installing a system that lets you speak to visitors and manage who you let in. You could consider:

- A door-entry intercom: An easy-to-fit wireless doorbell that comes with an entry phone you can keep near your chair.
- A video entry phone so you can see who is at the door: some video entry phones allow you to press a button to open the door from where you're sitting.
- A police-approved key safe, where your door key is held in a secure box by the front door, is a good option if you want friends, relatives or carers to be able to let themselves in.



### Moving around your Home

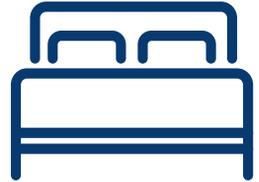
- Think about the type of flooring you have, wheelchair users may find laminate style flooring easier to manoeuvre and clean but this can be more slippery for those that are walking - if this is the case you may want to think about walking bare foot, wearing slippers with grips and generally being vigilant in relation to any spills and ensure they are cleaned up.
- Widening door frames or changing the direction your doors open can help you get about – particularly if you use a wheelchair.
- Make sure your home is well lit. Think about getting motion-sensor lights or voice activated options installed that switch on automatically when you get out of bed or enter a room.
- Install Alexa controlled lighting and TVs.
- If you find you need a lot more room or want to keep all your essential facilities (like the toilet or shower) on one floor, altering the layout or extending your home might be an option. An assessor from the Disabled Facilities Grants Team from the council can review for the most suitable options. You can also talk to a qualified surveyor or architect.

## Stairs

- Having a banister rail on both sides of the staircase to hold onto.
- If you are able to transfer, a stair lift can make getting up and down the stairs easier.
- Full time wheelchair users who need to access other floors in their property may find a through-floor lift a useful option if space is available.

## Bedroom

- If you find it difficult to get into bed or out of a chair, altering the height with raisers on the chair/bed legs may make this easier.
- Smaller pieces of equipment such as a bedside handle or bed lever or adjustable backrests that can be placed under the mattress can support you in transferring in/out of bed.
- Powered riser-recliner chairs and specialist beds that raise you into a position where it's easier to stand, or lower you to sit or lie down maybe helpful for those with more difficulty.
- Install a ceiling track hoist or using a transfer board.



## Bathroom

- Long-handled toilet paper holders, sponges, loofas and other toileting aids can be helpful for those with limited reach.
- Wash/Dry Bidet style (hands-free) toilets have automatic washing and drying functions that operate while you're seated.
- Lowering the bathroom sink and using lever or sensor taps.
- Fitting grab rails to help with balance or getting in/out of the bath.
- Bath board and seats can enable transfers into the bath and provide a seating option if your shower is currently fitted over the bath.
- Battery-powered bath lifts support your weight as you get in and out of the bath, while baths with a side opening mean you don't have to climb over the side.
- Installing a walk in shower or changing bathroom for a 'wet room' style shower means you can walk straight in, and adding a shower seat. A Shower bed may also be considered if a chair is difficult to use.
- Dispensers for shampoo and liquid soap can be installed to support those with less upper limb strength

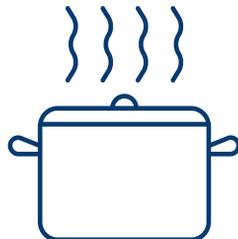
## Kitchen

Think about how you use your kitchen and what would make life easier for you.

Try to ensure things that you use regularly are positioned in easy reach in cupboards, drawers and worktops

### If you need a bit of help while cooking or making a hot drink, try:

- A perching stool which supports you in a near-standing position.
- Lowering kitchen worktops or height adjustable to make meal preparation easier (or consider lowering the cooker, or cupboards or installing cutaway under hob/sink).
- A kettle tipper to help you tilt the kettle or a one touch kettle which boils the water and fills the cup at the touch of a button.
- Using wire baskets to hold vegetables can reduce weight and risk of draining off hot water after cooking.
- Use non-slip matting or a spiked cutting board which lets you cut or peel vegetables one-handed.



### If you find picking up, opening or moving things in the kitchen difficult, try:

- Wide-handled or different shaped cutlery.
- High-rimmed plates and two-handled cups.
- Assistive tin, bottle and jar openers
- A sturdy trolley to support mobility and help you move food and drink from room to room. If you are a wheelchair user a lap tray may help you with this.

### If you have hearing problems

- Make sure you're safe in an emergency. Smoke alarms are essential – wireless smoke alarms are connected by radio signals so if one goes off they all do, or you can get ones that use vibrating pads to get your attention.
- Keep in touch with a voice-based or text-based phone. You can also get a sounder beacon installed which flashes and makes loud signals when a phone or any sensor is activated.

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