

TIPS FOR PHYSICAL LIMITATIONS

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The INFO SERIES has been developed to provide you with general information. The descriptions do not describe the full extent of information available. Please contact one of our Independent Living Specialists for more information

Sometimes, just simple everyday tasks can be a challenge. Fortunately, there are thousands of ideas and products to help with day-to-day living. This tip sheet provides ideas to make life easier. It can be as basic as removing scatter rugs to prevent slips and falls or as complex as installing a stair lift or elevator to improve accessibility.

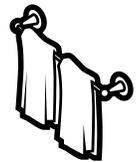


NON-TECH IDEAS

- Ask pharmacist to put **medications** in a different bottle that is easier to open. Also ask the pharmacist if they offer bubble packs. Bubble packs are similar to bubble wrap. Getting to the medication is as easy as popping a air-filled bubble.
- A great place to get **additional leverage** when getting out of the car is to put the window down and use the door.
- If having trouble pulling the **lever on the recliner** it will help to extend the handle for additional leverage. This can be done by sliding a PVC pipe over the handle. The pipe should extend above the handle and be the right size to fit snugly over the top.
- Sometimes holding a pen is hard. Invest in **large pens** or **grippers** (purchase in office supply).
- Use an eraser to **turn the pages** of a book or paper work.
- Ask people to let the **phone ring** many times so you have time to get up to get the phone.
- Put **telephone** jacks and phones in other rooms so you don't have to run to get the phone.
- Use **scissors** to open cellophane packages.
- Use a **box top opener** to open boxes.
- Use a **pliers** to grip pull-tabs on the foil/plastic seals of food items. The needle nose pliers work best so you can wrap the tap around the pliers and get better gripping power.
- Use **electrical appliances** whenever possible.
- If you have problems **opening jars**, here are hints for opening jars.

- Put jars on a rubber mat to help with opening.
 - Don't close jar lids or containers too tight once they have been opened.
 - Use a product that is a thin, flat disc made of pliable rubber, textured on one or both sides on the lid.
 - Use the wide rubber bands that are often used to hold broccoli together. Place around the top of the jar or bottle and the cover can be twisted off.
 - Hold the top of the jar or bottle under hot running water for a few seconds. The heat causes it to expand and makes opening easier.
 - Try using latex dishwashing gloves. They give a non-slip grip that makes opening jars easy.
 - Tap the edges of the lid on the counter or with a silverware handle to loosen the lid.
 - Use a wide-bladed flat screwdriver. Insert the blade under the edge of the lid and pry it up in a few places. It breaks the vacuum seal and the jar unscrews easily.
 - Use a bottle opener to open stubborn jars by slipping the point under the edge of the lid to break the seal.
 - Use an ice pick to puncture a hole in the center of the lid. The vacuum seal is released and the lid simply twists off. If the contents of the jar are not completely used, seal the opening with cellophane tape or plastic wrap for storage.
- For **moving items** from place to place, consider using a wheeled cart or baskets. For example put the dishes on an inexpensive wheeled cart or table to save steps and energy when setting the table. When carrying multiple items, put them in a basket so you don't drop them on the way.
 - Carry a plastic grocery bag with you. It makes it **easier to carry** small things if you are not able to use one arm, such as when using a cane.
 - Use a "fisherman's vest" which is like a "photographer's vest" to help **carry objects** or reduce the number of trips you make getting things. The vest can hold wallet, thick ink pens, note pads, camera, keys, magnifying glass, calculator, radio or a penlight. It's also a great organizer and now you have just one place to look.
 - If using a walker it might be easier to carry things by putting **shower-curtain rings** on the arms of the walker then just slip shopping bag handles onto the ring and snap the ring closed.
 - When **traveling**, send your clothes by UPS to your hotel or destination ahead of time to reduce how much luggage you need to take. Then all you need is a small carry on bag with your immediate needs. Send them home the same way.
 - Use **lightweight** utensils and dishes to make them easier to carry.
 - Place utensils, **pots, pans and measuring cups on a pegboard** or in an accessible cupboard instead of in lower cupboards, which require bending. Sit when getting things out of lower cupboards.
 - **Store dishes** close to the sink so that it will be easier to put them away once washed.

- Use a **non-skid mat** (made out of a material called "dycem") to stabilize bowls and plates.
- Place a cutting board over an open drawer to use as a **lower cutting surface** so you can sit and chop.
- Use an extended lever to assist with **lift-tab cans**.
- Use **pans with a wide base** that cannot be knocked over easily.
- Use **plastic containers** to avoid breakage.
- Store food and beverages (such as milk or juice) in **small, easy to manage containers**.
- Cook and strain vegetables without lifting hot and heavy pans. When **boiling food** in water, place in a food strainer or cooking basket. When it is time to drain you can just lift the strainer out of the water and you don't have to lift a heavy pot and hot water.
- Use a **food processor** for vegetable cutting and peeling.
- Use a **hand-held hose** for showering and bathing.
- Use a **long-handled** sponge or scrubbing brush to get to the hard-to-reach areas.
- Use **soap-on-a-rope**, bath mitts or sponges with soap inside or a soft soap applicator instead of bar soap.
- Use **lukewarm water** when bathing, as very hot water can cause fatigue and possible dizziness.
- Put a **towel on the back of your chair** and rub your back against it to dry. Or, use a terry cloth robe instead of a towel to dry off.
- Place a **towel on the floor** outside the tub to dry your feet so you don't slip.
- Get **rid of small bathroom mats** that may cause you to trip. Instead purchase a large rug that covers most of the floor, and apply non-stick backing or install wall-to-wall carpeting.
- Sew **straps on towels** to make them easier to hold while drying.
- Attach a **loop of ribbon or rope** to slip over handles. Then pull open using strength of wrist or forearm. This can be used on the refrigerator, cabinet doors, etc.
- **Motion sensors and timers** can be used to turn lights off and on. This is especially helpful for those who have difficulties with reaching.
- **Raise gardens** or try putting plants in flowerpots if you have trouble bending over to garden.
- A **five-inch cushion** helps you get out of chairs and wheelchairs more easily.
- A **strong rope attached to your bed** frame allows you to move around more easily in bed and helps you get out of bed.



- If possible, **arrange furniture** so outlets are available for lamps and appliances without the need for extension cords. If extension cords are used, make sure they are secured with tape and out of the way so you don't trip on them.
- Use **chairs with straight backs, armrests, and firm seats**. This will make it much easier for you to get up and sit down. Add firm cushions to existing pieces to add height and make it easier to move.
- To help **slide the chair** under a table once seated, put furniture moving "slides" under the chair legs.
- For a better **grip on handles**, wrap a wash cloth around the handle and hold in place with rubber bands.
- A tennis ball cut and slipped over a **door knob** makes it easier to grip and turn.
- Tie a **rope around the drawer** pull or door knob and it makes it easier to pull open.
- Create a **short reacher** by purchasing Mini Nylon Tongs designed for kitchen use. They are easy to squeeze and have a coating that holds the object nicely.

LOW TECHNOLOGY

- Sometimes **raising the bed or chairs** can assist with getting up. By placing an item under the legs you can increase the height. Risers can be made by using a 2x4 cut to the needed size and drilling a hole in it half-way through you can create a "riser". Risers can also be purchased at home improvement stores, home furnishing stores or order from an adaptive aides catalogue for around \$20.00.
- Objects such as a **stationary pole or "trapeze" bar** can be installed if you have difficulty getting out of bed.
- Purchase and install a **showerhead** that is removable or with height that can be adjusted.
- Put a **non-skid mat or decals** in the bathtub.
- Put **extended lever handles** on faucets to make them easier to turn. Replace turn handle faucets with single levers or have-hands free faucets that automatically turn on.
- Purchase **railings** to use by the toilet, showers, hallways, and bedside. Some attach to the fixture and others are installed on the wall.
- Use an **elevated toilet seat** and/or safety rails to assist standing from a low surface. Do not use towel racks or bathroom tissue holders to help you stand. These can be purchased from a durable medical equipment company for around \$50.00.
- Purchase a **bath and shower chair** starting at around \$40.00.
- Use an **electric toothbrush** for ease of brushing teeth.

- **Round doorknobs** can be hard to open. Purchase an adapter that fits over the doorknob to make turning easier. Find at home improvement/hardware stores or catalogue for \$6.00 - \$30.00.
- Install **handrails** along walls, hallways and stairwells where there is nothing to hold on to.
- **Sound Activated on/off switch** - - Use to activate the light or appliances. Ensure safety when entering a room or getting up at night. Cost is about \$30.00 from home improvement store or hardware store.
- **Automated switches** are used with a timer.
- Invest in **touchable lamps** or those that react to sound.
- **Rocker electrical switches** are easier to use. Also consider switches that light to assist finding them in the dark.
- Put a **wireless doorbell** in the bedroom or bathroom to use to get a person's attention in another part of the house where the ringer is installed (under \$20.00).
- Having trouble **gripping items**? You can purchase piping insulation from a hardware/home improvement store. Cut it to the size you need and put the handle in the center. Use for silverware, pens, hairbrushes, etc.
- **Device holds keys** with a large handle making it easier to hold and turn. Cost is \$9.00.
- **Keyless entry** uses a remote opener or keypad.
- Little levers **open soda** cans and are available for \$4.00.
- **Cutting board** features an edge to contain food. Purchase for about \$50.00.
- Use a **spike board** to stabilize vegetables, fruit, and potatoes so you have both hands free to peel or chop them.
- Use a **rocker knife** to chop small items. One brand is the Mezzaluna Double-Bladed Knife, by Fiskars. The double-bladed, double-handled tool allows users to easily mince herbs and small veggies with a simple rocking motion.
- Consider having at least one **counter workspace** that has been lowered so you can reach it from a sitting position.
- Use an **electric jar opener** for tightly sealed containers. Black and Decker sells a jar opener for \$29.99 at department stores. There are other non-electrical devices available.
- Use an **intercom system**. A baby monitor works for this and can be purchased for about \$20. "It was originally developed for parents to hear a baby's cry from another room. All I have to do is speak my wife's name to get assistance. I don't have to reach for a button to press."
- Enjoy the benefits of **remote control units**. Automatically turn on and off lights, the TV, radio, and other appliances. A basic model is about \$40 and can be purchased through Radio Shack or similar companies.



- Purchase a **phone** with larger push buttons to ease dialing and automatic dialing. Have frequently called numbers entered into speed dial.
- Purchase a **cell phone** or speakerphone so you don't have to jump up to answer.
- **Voice activated telephones** are easier to answer. Some have remote switch activators for quicker response time.
- Portable **ramps** and threshold ramps can make access in and out of the house easier for walkers or wheelchairs.
- Use **offset hinges** to make doorways wider for wheelchairs.



HIGH TECHNOLOGY

- **Personal Lifting Devices** – Assist with transporting a person from a bed to bath, to toilet, to bed. These can be mounted on casters and rolled around or some lifts are mounted on a ceiling rack system. (\$1,200 - \$2,500)
- **Lifts** are used if a person is unable to use stairs. These include stair glides, wheelchair stair lifts, porch or platform lifts and elevators. They are professionally installed and range from \$3,500 - \$4,500.
- **Lift chairs** are often recliners that raise the user into the standing position. (\$500 - \$12,000)
- **Automatic door openers.** - - These assist a person that uses a wheelchair, walker, crutches, or a cane. They are also helpful in a narrow hall or awkward corner where it is difficult to stand to the side of the door while it opens. (\$2,100 - \$2,500)
- **Electric Scooters** are three or four wheel powered mobility devices. (\$2,000 - \$5,000)
- **Electrical beds** are higher than most beds and often make it easier to change positions. (\$900 – \$3,000)
- **Raised washer and dryers** are now available and are helpful for people in wheelchairs or with limited bending ability. (\$1,200 – 1,500)
- **Adaptive computer aides** or voice activated computer systems make it easier to use a computer if visual or physical limitations interfere. (Computer systems range from \$1,000 to \$5,000.)
- **Environmental Control Units** can assist a person in managing their environment by providing commands to a computer unit that will then execute the command. The unit can answer the phone, open doors, turn on lights, and turn on the radio. (\$100 - \$5,000)
- **Roll-in-showers** can make it easier for people with mobility limitations, as well as wheelchair users. (\$8,000 and up)
- **Bathtubs** that raise and lower or may feature a door that opens on the side. (\$3,500 - \$12,000)

- **Bidets** are often installed for people with mobility limitations. This equipment assists with cleanliness and independence. (\$250 - \$400)
- If you are interested in **vehicle modifications**, ask for the Society's Assets Sheet on that subject.



DEMONSTRATION AND LOAN PROGRAM

Society's Assets operates a Demonstration and Loan Program that currently has over 1000 items. Equipment can be tried out before making a purchase. Over the years assistive technology has played an increasingly critical role in assisting individuals to live independently in their homes. Contact an Independent Living Coordinator at Society's Assets to see if we have the item you are looking for.



RESOURCES

- **Stores** - - Many of the items recommended are available at stores in the area.
- **Catalogues** - - Check with Society's Assets. Catalogues on assistive technology are available in the resource library.
- **Used equipment** may be available. Keep in mind that some equipment is very specialized to an individual's needs. Contact the Independent Living Coordinator for a list of resources. There are some local organizations that offer equipment recycling, as well as, state organizations and Internet sites. For mobility equipment there is a Wisconsin Wheelchair Recycling project.
- **Info Sheets** - - Society's Assets has Info Sheets that list resources of where to order items. There are Info Sheets for telephones, clothing, driving, hard of hearing equipment, visual aid equipment, and physical limitations.
- Check **web sites**. If you don't have a computer, the libraries have computers you can use.



FUNDING

There are many funding sources. Each source has its own regulations, limits and eligibility requirements, and each situation is different. Don't overlook the possibilities of combining funding sources to reach your goal. Here are some options to check out.

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|----------------------|---|--------------------------|
| • Medicaid | • Division of Vocational Rehabilitation | • Private Grants |
| • Medicaid Waivers | • Workers Compensation | • WisLoan |
| • Medicare | • Family Support Program | • County Funded Programs |
| • Private Insurance | • Disability Organizations | • Family Care Program |
| • Veteran's Benefits | | |



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Kenosha Office

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