

## The Bathroom: Additional Considerations

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Sometimes, more attention is paid to how a bathroom is decorated than to the safety of the space. Water on a bathroom floor is a slipping hazard, and often an invisible one. Falling in a bathroom is painful and potentially life-threatening because of the many hard surfaces — the floor,

toilet, countertop, tub. This handout explores additional ways that you can change your bathroom to make it accessible and safe for all.

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### Prefabricated Shower Inserts

Prefabricated zero-step shower inserts are available at big box stores and provide a convenient way to modify existing spaces.

Prefabricated shower inserts use the same drain as your existing tub drain and fit into the space where your tub/shower was located.

Wheelchair users can access these shower spaces as well as use the shower space to transfer from the wheelchair to the toilet.

You can add grab bars to the prefabricated shower walls, but they will need to be installed into secure blocking to prevent being torn from the wall when weight is applied. You may want to consult with an occupational or physical therapist for the best placement of the grab bars to meet your specific needs if you have any limitations.

Prefabricated shower inserts and grab bars should be installed by a professional.

### Accessible Sinks

Access to the bathroom sink that works for all people can be difficult with cabinet-style vanities or tall pedestal sinks. However, accessible vanities are available.

Accessible vanities are made for a wheelchair to slide underneath the sink. When installing, you'll want to remember to move the under-the-sink pipes so that they don't bump against the legs of the person in a wheelchair to prevent bruising and burns from hot pipes.

Wall-mounted sinks are another option that are wheelchair accessible; however, they can be dangerous. Unless specifically made and mounted correctly (to secure blocking, like a grab or assist bar), these sinks cannot take the weight of a person who uses them to help pull themselves up to standing from a wheelchair. An improperly installed wall-mounted sink could pull away from the wall when weight is applied, causing a fall.

Accessible sinks should be installed by a professional.

### Low-Cost Safety Devices

There are several low-cost safety devices in addition to those discussed in the HomeFit Guide and presentation you can consider for various areas of your home. These include shower transfer benches as well as various devices to help with getting on and off a toilet. Contact an occupational therapist or search the internet for assistive devices for a specific area of your home such as the bathroom, kitchen or bedroom to discover other options to meet your needs.

### Unsafe Devices

Keep in mind that there are unsafe products that are sold as grab or assist bars but that use a clamp or suction-cup to secure them to the wall or tub instead of secure blocking.

These devices can easily cause a fall if they separate from the surface they are adhered to and should not be used.