

Home Safety/Housekeeping/Environmental Controls

Assistive technology related to home safety, housekeeping, and environmental controls applies to such areas as: designing a safe home environment to prevent accidents, falls, fires and break-ins, as well as controlling household appliances and other "modern conveniences." Examples of specific devices are doorknob grips that allow you to open doors with minimal effort, and lightweight sponge cleaners perfect for individuals with limited reach and range of motion. Making your house more accessible can be difficult. For assistance in assessing the layout of your home, call the North Dakota Centers for Independent Living or the Commission on Persons with Disabilities (see Additional Resources section). Here are a few of the assistive technology devices that can help you in your home:

Wall Grab Bars: These devices can be attached to your bathroom walls and shower to prevent slips and falls. Grab bars can also be placed anywhere in your home where stabilization and support is needed.

Doorknob Extensions: These devices are perfect for those with arthritis, limitations in grasping or turning, or those who only have the use of one arm. This device is simply an extension handle that attaches to the knob and allows you to open the door by pushing down on the handle, rather than turning the knob.

Gripping Devices: For those with insufficient hand or finger strength, these devices allow an individual to turn handles, faucets, dials, and sometimes even open childproof bottles. Depending on the model, these devices either automatically conform to the shape of the dial or knob, or can be adjusted to fit the knob.

Reachers: These devices are perfect for those who have difficulty grasping, reaching or bending. With a reacher, you can pick up anything from a pin to a large can or book with minimal reach and effort. Some reachers come with magnets or suction cups on the ends, or with wrist or forearm support braces. Size and length also vary.

Long Reach Cleaners: For those with minimal reach and range of motion, sponges and dusters are available attached to long poles to make cleaning easier. Cleaning can be done from either a sitting or standing position.

Overflow Alert: This device can be attached to a sink, tub, or cooking pot to alert an individual when the liquid has reached a certain level. This is a good safety tool to prevent overflowing.

Motion Sensor Lights: This is a safety feature that can be used both inside and outside of the home. Lights turn on when motion is detected, preventing fumbles

or falls while trying look for the light switch. It also alerts you of any movement outside of the house and deters intruders.

Wandering Alert System: This device is especially useful in caring for persons with Alzheimer's. The person wears a pendant or bracelet which activates an alarm when he/she wanders beyond a certain perimeter around the home.

What you can do to make your home safe:

- Buy appliances that automatically turn off when not in use.
- Attach mats or grips to the shower floor to prevent slipping. You may also want to try putting grips on your porch steps, or any area that may be slippery when wet.
- Make sure that carpeting or rugs are securely attached to the floor boards to prevent slips or falls.
- When purchasing containers, make sure that they are easy to open and close.
- Buy cleaning products that come in squeeze bottles for convenience, as well as to prevent spills.