



**Steps to Making Your
Home and Community
Safer and Better**



Where do you want to spend your later years? According to an AARP survey, an overwhelming majority of older Americans (89%) want to continue to live in their current home and community for as long as possible. It is easy to understand why. Your home is a reflection of who you are and the site of cherished memories and life experiences. Plus, your community may offer you the very things that make life meaningful—family, friends, places of worship, trusted health care providers and opportunities for social and civic engagement.

Does your home and community have what it takes for you to age successfully? As you grow older, will you be able to have a high quality of life, maintain independence, and stay engaged in civic and social life? AARP has tools and resources to help you learn how your home and community measure up. Start now—visit www.aarp.org/housing.

Take Charge and Make Your Home and Community Safer and Better With These Steps:

- Keep Your Home in Top Form For Comfort and Safety
- Become Familiar with “Universal Design”
- Stay Connected—Explore Transportation Options in Your Community
- Drive Safely
- Make Your Community More Livable
- Subscribe to Receive Legislative Alerts and Other Information
- Sign Up to Receive Regular Updates on Housing and Transportation Issues
- Get Involved to Help in Your Community

Keep Your Home in Top Form for Comfort and Safety

When you become a homeowner, you quickly find out very few of your house's features are maintenance free. Proper care of your home not only will keep you safer and more comfortable but also will help enable you to stay in your home for as long as possible.

There are many changes you can make to your home, many at little or no cost, which can greatly increase its comfort and safety for you and your family. Our favorites are included here. Most of the products needed for these modifications can be purchased at your local hardware store.

- Install handrails on both sides of all steps (inside and outside).
- Secure all carpets and area rugs with double-sided tape.
- Install easy-to-grasp “D” shaped handles for all drawers and cabinet doors.
- Use brighter bulbs that do not produce excessive glare in all settings.
- Install nightlights in all areas of night activity.
- Add reflective, non-slip tape on all non-carpeted stairs.
- Install lever handles on all doors.
- Place a bench near entrances for setting down purchases and resting.
- Install closet lights, as well as adjustable, pull down rods and shelves.
- Install rocker light switches; consider illuminated ones in select areas.

Become Familiar with “Universal Design”

It doesn't matter if you are young or old, short or tall, have a disability or are a prize-winning athlete. Everyone, whether you are making changes to your existing home or are building a new one, can benefit by incorporating “universal design” features into their home. Universal design is about creating a home for everyone regardless of age or physical ability. It includes home design features such as: a no-step entrance into the house; a kitchen, bedroom, and bath on the main floor; wider doorways and hallways; good lighting; and easy-to-reach switches and outlets.

Having universal design features in your home can help you continue to live there as you age or if you become disabled. Additional resources on universal design include: The Universal Design Alliance at www.universaldesign.org; The Center on Universal Design at www.design.ncsu.edu/cud; and EasyLiving Home at www.easylivinghome.org.



Universal design can help you live more comfortably in your home.

Stay Connected—Explore Transportation Options in Your Community

The ability to get around is essential to living independently and aging successfully. Having a range of transportation options lets you stay connected to your community and maintain your independence.

Take action by working with neighborhood associations, community groups, and local transportation planning organizations, also known as metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), to make sure your community has:

- Safe, well-designed and well-maintained sidewalks that connect homes and neighborhoods with shopping, medical services, places of worship, and cultural and recreational facilities.
- Well-designed streets that accommodate all types of travel (e.g., driving, public transportation, walking, and cycling).
- Clear signage that helps drivers of all ages navigate easily and safely.
- Alternatives to driving, including reliable public transportation or on-demand transportation such as dial-a-ride or volunteer drivers.

To learn more about an assortment of mobility programs and practices from around the United States, download the AARP guide *Promising Approaches for Promoting Lifelong Community Mobility* at www.aarp.org/drive.



Drive Safely

For most of us, driving is fundamental to our independence and quality of life. American society is highly dependent on personal automobiles and, in many communities, the car may be the only transportation option available. Driving helps us to stay engaged in civic and social activities, and to participate in activities that enhance well-being. The ability to drive safely can be essential to helping us stay independent as we age. The AARP Driver Safety Program is the nation's first and largest driver safety course designed especially for drivers 50 and older.

Check if your driving skills need a “tune up.” Test your driving IQ at www.aarp.org/drive. For many people, a little refresher might be helpful. Call **1-888-AARP NOW (1-888-227-7669)** or visit www.aarp.org/drive to get information on an AARP Driver Safety Program classroom course being taught near you. Or, to take the online version of this course at your own pace, go to www.aarp.org/drive/online. After you complete the AARP Driver Safety Program classroom or online course, you will receive a course completion certificate. And, depending on the state where you live and your auto insurance company, you may be eligible for an insurance premium reduction or discount. Please consult with your insurance company or agent for further details.

When driving a car is no longer an option for you or a loved one, *We Need to Talk: Family Conversations with Older Drivers*, a publication developed by The Hartford Financial Services Group, Inc. and the MIT AgeLab, can be a helpful resource. Visit www.thehartford.com/talkwitholderdrivers/ for additional information.

Find helpful resources and tools
for safe driving at AARP.org.

Make Your Community More Livable

Homes and communities designed for livability empower their residents to remain independent and engaged, and offer a better quality of life.

Start with making one simple change in your home or community, perhaps one recommended in this brochure. Then go to AARP's online community at www.aarp.org/communityexchange and share your story about the changes you've made to your home or community. Others can benefit from your ideas and experience. For more information on livable communities visit: *Opportunities for Creating Livable Communities* at www.aarp.org/ppi; the American Planning Association at www.planning.org; or Smart Growth America at www.smartgrowthamerica.org.

Help your community and share your story with the online community at AARP.org.



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Subscribe and Receive Legislative Alerts and Other Information

Get involved and receive legislative alerts as AARP advocates to create livable communities with more affordable and appropriate housing options and improved transportation systems. Subscribe and get updates on the latest issues that impact your life at www.aarp.org/makeadifference.

Sign Up to Receive Regular Updates on Housing and Transportation Issues

Stay informed on housing, transportation, and other issues by signing up for AARP's online Family Newsletter. Subscribe at www.aarp.org/family.

Get Involved to Help in Your Community

AARP can help you to “create the good” in your own community by doing simple things to help your family, other people, or yourself. Learn about easy things you can do at www.aarp.org/makeadifference.



To learn more about AARP or to become a member
visit www.aarp.org or call 1-888-OUR-AARP
(1-888-687-2277); TTY 1-877-434-7598

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization that helps people 50+ have independence, choice and control in ways that are beneficial and affordable to them and society as a whole. AARP does not endorse candidates for public office or make contributions to either political campaigns or candidates. We produce *AARP The Magazine*, the definitive voice for 50+ Americans and the world's largest-circulation magazine with over 33 million readers; *AARP Bulletin*, the go-to news source for AARP's 40 million members and Americans 50+; *AARP Segunda Juventud*, the only bilingual U.S. publication dedicated exclusively to the 50+ Hispanic community; and our website, AARP.org. AARP Foundation is an affiliated charity that provides security, protection, and empowerment to older persons in need with support from thousands of volunteers, donors, and sponsors. We have staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

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