

Making Our Homes Safer and More Comfortable as We Age, updated April 2021

What can we do to make our homes safer for us as we age?

There are many products that enable us to make our homes safer as we age – and without question, safer is more comfortable both physically and emotionally. Our goals in all of these is to prevent falls, and if you do have difficulty walking or with climbing stairs at some point, even if temporarily, to be able to navigate your home safely.

Stairs and steps: One of the most significant improvements you can make is to install railings on both sides of any inside stairways you have, and at least one railing on any outdoor steps. PCV members should contact the Help Desk to get names of our member-suggested vendors / contractors for installing these items.

Lighting at night, and in dark places:

- Guidelights: There are LED products that turn on in the dark and don't need to be plugged into an electrical outlet. They are called guidelights; we are aware of one by SnapPower, another by Leviton. The cost per light is between \$15 and \$20. You don't need an electrician, just a handy person. Here are some images and links.



- o <https://www.snappower.com/>
 - o <https://www.homedepot.com/s/leviton%2520led%2520guidelight?NCNI-5>
 - o
- Battery-powered motion sensor lights, for those parts of your home where there is no switch or outlet to connect to, such as in hallways or the mid-point of a staircase, or near a commode. They have adhesive to attach to the wall. Here are a couple of examples, seen on Amazon; there are others.

- o Mr. Beams MB532 Motion-Sensing LED Step/Stair Light, 2-Pack, priced at about \$19 - https://www.amazon.com/Mr-Beams-Nightlight-Battery-Powered-Motion-Sensing/dp/B075NX9H42/ref=sr_1_15?crd=259GZUZOHHCAL&dchild=1&keywords=mr+beams+indoor+motion+sensor+light&qid=1610569295&srefix=Mr+Beams%2Caps%2C146&sr=8-15
- o Or these by HFCDL, available in 3-packs, 5-packs or 6-packs and ranging from \$10 for a 3-pack to \$17 for a 6-pack. https://www.amazon.com/HFCDL-Semilunar-Dimmable-Function-Motion-Sensing/dp/B08LZ1SZ3D/ref=sr_1_6?dchild=1&keywords=HFCDL&qid=1618782105&sr=8-6&th=1

- Flashlights: We all get up in the middle of the night to go to the bathroom and don't want to turn on a bright light that will tend to wake us up, since



our plan is to go back to sleep. One option is a red-light flashlight, which provides enough light for us to find the commode but still leave us dark adapted and so ready to go back to sleep. Here's one of them, just 3 inches long and easy to keep at the bedside, though originally designed for hunters to put on their cap brim so they can see in the dark but are invisible to deer. It's made by

Energizer and called a night-vision cap

light. Model HFCAP22. Available at hardware stores and at Amazon, for

\$13- \$15. https://www.acehardware.com/departments/lighting-and-electrical/flashlights-and-lanterns/head-lamps/3559291?store=17608&gclid=Cj0KCQjwse-DBhC7ARIsAI8YcWJBtS_42evBmnfJeQaKiT3FfALaoR5Thf6uzSUjzs8cwWNxfal4y68aAvQ0EALw_wcB&gclsrc=aw.ds,

- https://www.amazon.com/EVEREADY-Battery-CO-ENCAP22E-Light/dp/B01GS74ZKY/ref=asc_df_B01GS74ZKY/?tag=hyprod-20&linkCode=df0&hvadid=198100801330&hvpos=&hvnetw=g&hvrnd=8064475506231988562&hvpone=&hvptwo=&hvmmt=&hvdev=c&hvdvcmdl=&hvlocint=&hvlocphy=9007779&hvtargid=pla-351261853341&pssc=1

Laundry: For many of us, washers and dryers are not on the same level as the bedrooms, and are often in the basement, so two floors below where most of the laundry is generated. For years, we've all carried laundry baskets on our hips, walking unbalanced and unable to see where our feet are - and we know that this is unsafe.

- Here's one laundry basket with handles, so you can carry the laundry with one hand, walking balanced, and able to hold onto the stairway railing at the same time. Available at the Container Store, for \$19, it's a Lustroware Modern Feel Storage Tote.



- o <https://www.containerstore.com/s/lustroware-modern-feel-storage-tote-basket/d?q=laundry+basket&productId=10028239>

- Another option, used by one of our members, is a big IKEA bag with handles, for 99 cents. <https://www.ikea.com/us/en/p/frakta-shopping-bag-large-blue-17228340/>



- For carrying laundry on the same floor, there are laundry baskets on wheels. Here's one from the Container Store, called a Rolling Hamper, for \$22.

- <https://www.containerstore.com/s/rolling-hamper-with-wheels/d?q=laundry+basket&productId=10026191>

- For carts on wheels so you don't need to bend down, here's one from Norton Supply, for more than \$140.

<https://www.nortonsupply.com/collections/wire-laundry-carts/products/standard?variant=31863174135880>



- The Container Store also carries several models, starting at \$140.

<https://www.containerstore.com/s/steele-canvas-black-laundry-cart/d?q=laundry+basket&productId=11013163>

Step ladders and Step Stools. Yes, we're told not to use ladders, but we do anyway. With that in mind, any step ladder or step stool in your home must have a rail or handle to hold onto. You should have ladders and/or step stools where you are likely to need them - near the kitchen, in the basement, in or near your bedroom, for access to clothes closets, so you'll need more than one.

- If you expect to need to move a ladder from where it is stored to where you'll need it, consider ones that weigh less. Here are links to two 3-step step ladders, one by Polder, which weighs 7 pounds, costs \$80 at the Container Store and is sometimes on sale for less; <https://www.containerstore.com/s/polder-3-and-5-step-aluminum-folding-ladders/d?q=polder+step+ladder&productId=10000800>



- another is by Lionladder, weighs 7.39 pounds and is \$60 on Amazon.



https://www.amazon.com/dp/B07M8QCLRS/ref=syn_sd_onsite_desktop_305?psc=1&uh_it=0ca05ed0ccfd9570573b3bfcd798ef7a_CT&spLa=ZW5jcmlwdGVkUXVhbGlmaWVyPUEyVjFITktCWktUNTlIJmVuY3J5cHRlZElkPUUwMjk3MjQ3QklTVlM3VExQWjlSjMvY3J5cHRlZEFkSWQ9QTAAzMjcZMTYxVjNCTE9DWlpJQjlYJndpZGdlE5hbWU9c2Rfb25zaXRlX2Rlc2t0b3AmYWw0aW9uPWNsaWNrUmVkaXJlY3QmZG9Ob3Rmb2dDbGljaZ10cnVl

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- There are some ladders that offer more handles to hold onto, with railings on the side, but they tend to weigh more. The advantage of these models is that they have more places at which you can hold on, their disadvantage is their weight. If you have room in your clothes closet to store one of these heavier ladders and that's the only place you will use it, it may be a good choice for you.



- This 2-step model, by LivingSURE, is available on Amazon, priced at \$69 and weighing 12 pounds.

[https://www.amazon.com/Step-Ladder-Handles-LivingSURETM-](https://www.amazon.com/Step-Ladder-Handles-LivingSURETM-XL/dp/B075DM3VXC/ref=asc_df_B075DM3VXC/?tag=hyprod-20&linkCode=df0&hvadid=309793588516&hvpos=&hvnetw=g&hvrnd=11408761463143370785&hvpone=&hvptwo=&hvqmt=&hvdev=c&hvdvcmdl=&hvlocint=&hvlocphy=9007779&hvtargid=pla-590446967171&pvc=1&psc=1&tag=&ref=&adgrpid=65719104470&hvpone=&hvpone=&hvadid=309793588516&hvpos=&hvnetw=g&hvrnd=11408761463143370785&hvqmt=&hvdev=c&hvdvcmdl=&hvlocint=&hvlocphy=9007779&hvtargid=pla-590446967171)

[XL/dp/B075DM3VXC/ref=asc_df_B075DM3VXC/?tag=hyprod-20&linkCode=df0&hvadid=309793588516&hvpos=&hvnetw=g&hvrnd=11408761463143370785&hvpone=&hvptwo=&hvqmt=&hvdev=c&hvdvcmdl=&hvlocint=&hvlocphy=9007779&hvtargid=pla-590446967171&pvc=1&psc=1&tag=&ref=&adgrpid=65719104470&hvpone=&hvpone=&hvadid=309793588516&hvpos=&hvnetw=g&hvrnd=11408761463143370785&hvqmt=&hvdev=c&hvdvcmdl=&hvlocint=&hvlocphy=9007779&hvtargid=pla-590446967171](https://www.amazon.com/Step-Ladder-Handles-LivingSURETM-XL/dp/B075DM3VXC/ref=asc_df_B075DM3VXC/?tag=hyprod-20&linkCode=df0&hvadid=309793588516&hvpos=&hvnetw=g&hvrnd=11408761463143370785&hvpone=&hvptwo=&hvqmt=&hvdev=c&hvdvcmdl=&hvlocint=&hvlocphy=9007779&hvtargid=pla-590446967171&pvc=1&psc=1&tag=&ref=&adgrpid=65719104470&hvpone=&hvpone=&hvadid=309793588516&hvpos=&hvnetw=g&hvrnd=11408761463143370785&hvqmt=&hvdev=c&hvdvcmdl=&hvlocint=&hvlocphy=9007779&hvtargid=pla-590446967171)

- Luisladders makes a 3-step ladder with railings, available on Amazon for \$48, weighing 18 pounds. This company, and others, show 2-step models with railings in images with their 3-step versions, but we are unable to find anyone who sells them.



[https://www.amazon.com/LUISLADDERS-Ladder-Folding-Non-Slip-](https://www.amazon.com/LUISLADDERS-Ladder-Folding-Non-Slip-Handrails/dp/B07V9FLYXF/ref=sr_1_12?dchild=1&keywords=LUISLADDERS&qid=1618786001&sr=8-12#productDetails)

[Handrails/dp/B07V9FLYXF/ref=sr_1_12?dchild=1&keywords=LUISLADDERS&qid=1618786001&sr=8-12#productDetails](https://www.amazon.com/LUISLADDERS-Ladder-Folding-Non-Slip-Handrails/dp/B07V9FLYXF/ref=sr_1_12?dchild=1&keywords=LUISLADDERS&qid=1618786001&sr=8-12#productDetails)

Step stools should also have handles, and like step ladders, they vary in how much they weigh; 5 different models on amazon show a range of 7 to 8.5 pounds. Step stools also vary in how high the step is from the floor; an adjustable one is able to be adjusted to 8.5 inches, 9.5 inches and 10.5 inches from the floor; non-adjustable ones seem to come in at 9 inches, 9.25 inches and 9.5 inches. Keep in mind that you cannot use the railing on a step stool to lean on to help you climb up. The stool will tip over if you try to do that.

Grab bars: did you know that you can buy a toilet paper holder that is also a grab bar? There are several available at Home Depot, priced from about \$45 to \$85.

Here's one of them, from Delta, for \$69.



<https://www.homedepot.com/s/toilet%2520paper%2520grab%2520bar?NCNI-5>

Just make sure that it gets installed into studs or other ways that make sure it will offer the stability in the wall that a grab bar must be able to do.

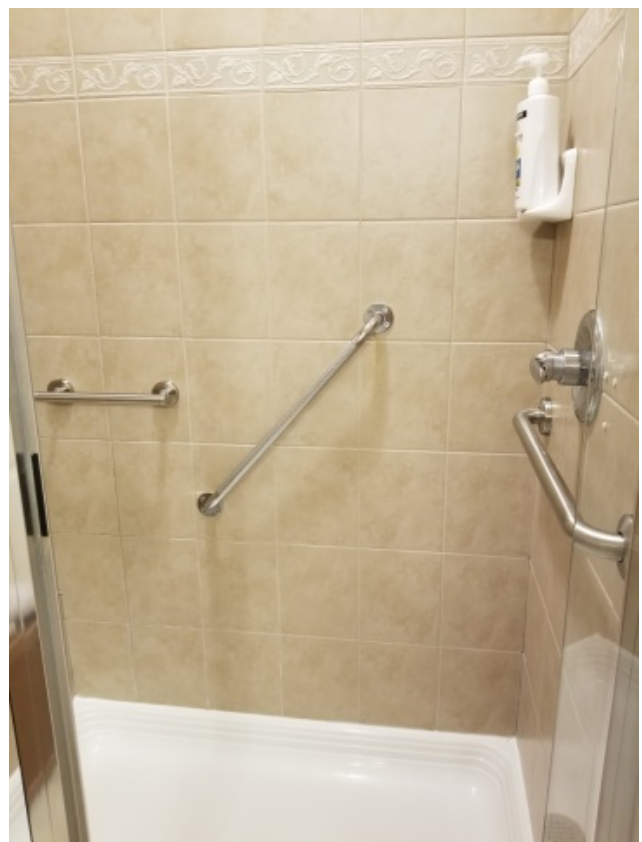
Depending on how your commode is placed, the ability to push off against the top of a vanity may be sufficient to enable rising in conjunction with a toilet paper holder grab bar on the other side. It just might make your home accessible to those friends who need that extra assistance.

There are also grab bars that don't get installed with screws but with adhesive, so there's no need to drill into already installed tile. The company, called No Drilling Required, sells their products directly. They are also available from Drive Medical, Wayfair, Home Depot and other medical supply stores, among others. Here's a link to their grab bars.

<https://www.nodrillingrequired.com/Grab-Bars-s/52.htm> and their assist bars

<https://www.nodrillingrequired.com/12-Decorative-Assist-Bar-p/dk222-ss-ndr.htm>

and a picture of two of them installed in a shower horizontally along with a diagonally installed screw-in type that was initially installed when the tile was new.



Price ranges from \$70 to \$123 depending on size and finish.

Some advice from members:

- o Instead of climbing on a ladder, some of our members use a grabber to get lightweight items down from a high shelf. Here's a review of some of them. <https://www.reviewed.com/lifestyle/best-right-now/the-best-reacher-grabbers>
- o Install seat height toilets when needing to change the commode, but in the meantime, you can use a toilet seat extender to make your low commode a seat-height one. Several are available at Home Depot and other hardware stores. Here's one, priced at \$56 (not including the commode).

