

Own Your Future

Long Term Care Planning: **Is Your Home Ready?**

Cindi Jones, Chief Deputy, Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services:

Long-term care for me is a set of services that allow somebody to stay in their home as long as possible.

Title Graphic:

Is Your Home Ready?

Narrator:

Most people would prefer to stay in their own homes for as long as possible. But, homes that are easy to live in at age 50 can present problems in later life. Start thinking about small changes to your home to keep it safe in the years ahead. Here are some ideas.

Bonnie Cauthorn, IIDA, CID, Principal, Design Source, Inc. Senior Living Communities:

Whether it's a residential home or a community setting, it's extremely important that the environment be one that you're comfortable in, that you feel secure and independent in being- cause it's our home.

I think as people start to think about retirement, the biggest thing they can do in their home environments is start to downsize and get rid of all the stuff that we've spent a lifetime collecting, that our children are going to have to do something with.

If someone were going to build a new house now in approximately 50- at the age of 50 for long-term use- they need to make sure that all the bathrooms have blocking in them- potential handrails and grab-bars, that's the first thing. They need to make sure all the doors are wide enough to accommodate walkers and wheelchairs.

The kitchens I would make universal design, making sure that the counter heights are where they need to be so there's not a lot of stooping or bending. All the cabinets need to be so that they roll out, the grab- the hardware needs to be such that if arthritis presents itself, that that's easy to use.

Floor covers are very important because they need to be- they need to provide an even transition. Those transitions need to be as smooth and level as possible, there are transition strips that are available to make that transition. The idea is that as we age, we shuffle our feet.

Lighting is the biggest issue for seniors because as we age, our eyes change. And with the yellowing of eye and the change in the cornea, we need more lighting to do the tasks that we did at 20. As a matter of fact, we need two-thirds more lighting between 20 and 60. So we need to get light levels up to where we can see clearly and easily. We need to get task lighting in specific areas of where we would be doing a task.

They need to make sure that the first floor is entirely inhabitable so that it becomes almost an efficiency. They might even potentially put in structure for a chairlift up the stairs, if in fact they can't live on the first floor.

No matter where home is, it needs to take on all the connotations that homes should be- and just make it what it needs to be for you and not worry about what everybody else is doing.