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## **A Room for Mom**

When your parents or older friends and relatives are visiting (or moving in with you), you can make several modifications to your home's interior to make everyone more comfortable. Changes in visual acuity, upper body strength and balance can make negotiating stairs, getting up from a soft chair or sofa, and getting in and out of bathtub or showers difficult for older adults. These are all places for potential falls. Let's examine three areas of the home where quick upgrades will yield the most benefits.

### **Guest Room:**

A separate space for your guests that's away from the bustle of your household will give everyone more privacy. Provide a comfortable upholstered chair for reading with good lighting, because reading in bed can be uncomfortable for many people. The chair should have a firm seat cushion and arms to make it easier to get out of. A storage ottoman on wheels can do multiple duty as a place to put bed linens, set a suitcase, sit on to dress and to prop up feet on while reading. Check to see if the window coverings are due for a cleaning or replacement. Dust-collecting fabric drapes and mini-blinds can be replaced with cordless shades or shutters to decrease allergens in the room. A hard floor surface rather than carpet makes it easier to negotiate with a walker or to roll a wheelchair. Placing a large area rug under the bed that extends about 30" around the bed's perimeter makes a cozy spot for bare feet to land first thing in the morning.

### **Bathroom:**

Changes here can benefit the entire family. Replace your toilet with a "comfort height" toilet with an elongated seat. These toilets' seats are about 19" high and much easier to use as hips stiffen with age. These toilets come in low flow and dual flush models from Kohler® and Toto®. Grab bars can be installed without replacing the tile when you use the Securemount Anchor™ series from Moen®. These should be placed for ease of entering and exiting the shower and the bath tub. A grab bar near the toilet can also be used as a towel rack. Install an occupancy sensor in the bath that will turn the light on when someone enters the room and turn off the light when motion is no longer detected. Using wireless remote controls for a shade on a window above the tub prevents the awkward stretching for a cord.



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### **Main Living Areas:**

Install motion detectors at the top and bottom of the stair landings which will turn on lights to illuminate the stairs as someone enters that space. Individual battery operated LED lights can be mounted on the sides of the stair wall near the tread level for only about \$10 each. These lights can be controlled wirelessly by the motion detector to avoid electrical work that cuts into the drywall. Provide comfortable seating for all ages with firm seat and back cushions on upholstered furniture. An upholstery shop will replace a sofa seat cushion for about \$75. Consider replacing a worn occasional chair with a motorized recliner. They are available in many design styles and fabrics to coordinate with your current furnishings and have the advantage of infinite positioning for different height individuals. If your beige walls and neutral furnishings look dated, you may want to use a new color scheme to breathe life into your rooms. Non-allergenic paint like Benjamin Moore Aura™ will dry in two hours and not smell like you just painted when the guests arrive. Enjoy your guests, knowing the improvements you've made will be enjoyed by the entire household for years to come.

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