

ADAPTING OR BUILDING A NEW HOME



Multiple Sclerosis Society
of SA & NT

This factsheet provides some basic guidance if you are building a new home that is adaptable to your changing needs or modifying an existing home. An adaptable home will help to minimise the need for future modifications and also keep costs to a minimum.

- Make sure that there is plenty of space for the easy manoeuvring of wheelchairs and walkers. To help to conserve energy open plan houses are often a good idea.
- The standard area required for a wheelchair to do a complete 360° rotation is 2450mm square.
- Bay windows can also be used to provide that little extra turning room.

Make sure that there are no steps around the house. This includes verandas, the transitions between paths, and front doors. Sliding door runners

can be set into the concrete slab to provide flat access.

You may like to consider lower wall coverings if it is likely that walls will be bumped. Some options include wooden panelling, door guards or even carpet.

Have windows set at an appropriate height to be enjoyed both sitting and standing. Make sure that the catches can also be reached from a sitting position.

Have switches and power points set at a height that can be easily reached from a sitting position. An approximate height is around 1100mm.

You may wish to consider home management systems such as water temperature controls to make using showers etc. a lot easier to manage, or intercom systems to assist in faster communication around the home.

Disability SA has information sheets which will assist with

designing kitchens and other wet areas in your home.

Please refer to [Kitchen Design: meeting everyone's needs](#). This includes:

- Kitchen layout
- Doors and windows
- Choice of materials
- Worktops
- Sinks
- Storage
- Taps
- Flooring
- Switches
- Electrical appliances
- Lighting

Bathroom and Toilet

Maintaining safety in the bathroom is very important and may assist in making you more independent.

Disability SA also has an information sheet on [Bathroom Safety](#) which will offer suggestions that may help keep your bathroom safe. They include:

- Shower
- Bath
- Hot water and scalding
- Taps
- Toilet
- Slip resistant flooring

Shower

- Shower alcoves should not have lips or hobs to allow safe and easy access.
- The alcove should allow enough room for a sitting person to manoeuvre as well

as allow enough room for any future carers. The recommended size is 1160mm x 1000mm.

- Access to the shower should be at least 800mm wide to allow for the passage of a chair.
- It is recommended that the shower be fitted with a weight bearing, adjustable shower hose to allow for easy control.
- Showers should be fitted with at least one rail opposite the position of any current or future shower chairs, approx 900mm off the ground. The rails should be 30-40mm in diameter with a clearance of 50-60mm from the wall to allow for fingers and knuckles, and should be secured to withstand a force of 110kg in any position and direction.
- Rails may not necessarily need to be installed at time of building as it is quite easy to add these later, when required.
- Internal tiled walls can be a better option than shower screens, as they are safer and also provide extra support for rails.

Vanity

- Basins should allow access underneath to enable a chair to be wheeled under it. This can be achieved by either having an overhanging basin or no cupboards beneath the basin.
- All taps should have lever type handles as they are much easier to use than the ball style.
- Mirrors should be placed at a height that allows both standing and seated people to see their reflections. A full-length mirror may be a good solution, or alternatively, a mirror can be hung so that it is angled downwards.
- Having storage cupboards in the bathroom may also be an advantage, as it allows easy access to extra towels.

Toilet

- Rails should be installed to suit individual needs.
- Toilet rails do not have to be attached to the wall; they can also be attached to the toilet through various aids. Alternatively a free standing toilet seat raise or surround can be used.
- Paper dispensers should be placed to the side or the front of

the toilet and be suitable for one hand use.

- Flush buttons should be no higher than 1100mm with a minimum diameter of 50mm to allow for easy use.

Garages

- Ensure the garage is wide enough and long enough to allow for chair access to the side and back of the car.
- Have automatic remote control roller doors for easy access.
- A door providing easy access to the house from the garage increases safety and security.
- Consider having a higher than standard garage to allow for access to vehicles such as vans.

Equipment and Home Modifications Program

If you think you may benefit from equipment or home modifications, the MS Society can also help you with information to promote safety, function and independence in your home.

You may be eligible to register with Disability SA (DSA). They will arrange for a referral to the Adult Specialist Services Intervention and Support Team (ASSIST) who outsource to the MS Society.

The supply of equipment and home modifications is co-ordinated through Domiciliary Equipment Service (DES). The types and specifications of available equipment are shown on the DES online catalogue at www.des.domcare.sa.gov.au.

Your Occupational Therapist can assist you to find equipment that can make your daily tasks easier and maximize independence.

You can also visit the Independent Living Centre (ILC) which has a large range of equipment to view and details of suppliers for purchases. The ILC has qualified health professionals to assist you in making equipment choices.

The [Independent Living Centre](#) information is available on the Disability SA Website.

Tel: 1300 885 886 or
08 8266 5260

Address: 11 Blacks Road,
Gilles Plains, SA

Website www.sa.gov.au

Information sheets are also available through Disability SA under the [Home Modifications and Equipment Information Sheets](#)

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