

HELP FOR PALS – REMODELING SUGGESTIONS

Collected from PALS/CALS

Revised June 27, 2017

One thing that was helpful in our bedroom was double outlets at the head of the bed. By the time you plug in a lamp and a clock a two plug outlet is full. Having four in each spot, we didn't have so many extension cords strung around for the bi-pap, air bed, suction, heating blanket...

Wide door for big wheel chair!

Enough room for the chair to come alongside the toilet.

Raised toilet.....we had a "Toiletavater"

A roll in shower

Knees under the sink. We just had the doors to that cabinet removed.

For a new bathroom sink, select the kind that protrudes out beyond the countertop. This makes it so much easier to use from a wheelchair.

Select levers for doors vice circular door knobs.

Be leery of all the ADA requirements. For example, if you already cannot do laundry, you don't need an accessible laundry room.

If your ingress/egress points are not covered, consider how you'll get in and out when the snow piles up.

Remember that if you have a side ramp van and park it in a garage, you'll need an empty space on the right side to deploy the ramp.

While you may shy away from some remodeling because you don't think you need it, focus on the space and modifications you'll need when you're totally dependent on a caregiver.

Small places like bathrooms are a big problem. If possible, make the space big enough to completely maneuver a wheel chair without backing in or out. You may also need the extra space to roll a hooyer lift in and out.

Another bathroom tip: If you're gutting or building a bathroom, place a power outlet next to the commode (away from the shower) so you can plug in a bidet or some other device.

Good and bad vendors. For cabinetry, countertops and the like, I was very impressed with Affordable Custom Cabinets in the Valley off Pines near the I-90 interchange. They're knowledgeable about accessibility, do fantastic work and are not expensive. My biggest heartache was flooring. My contractor subbed to United Floor Covering. Their work was horrible. They did not understand wheelchair requirements and were reluctant to honor their warranties.

If your budget allows it, consider a full or partial home generator. You'll likely be dependent on power.

The cost of your renovation can be claimed as medical expenses on your federal tax return, minus any amount they increased the value of your house. But most of these renovations don't increase home values. The IRS requires a memo from your doctor for some things like a house generator, saying your medical condition requires uninterrupted power.

Dan

From Don and Brandi

We totally agree with all the prior comments and would add the following:

- your shower area can NOT be too big---reclining bath chairs are HUGE! Our shower measure 6' x 8' and we could use about 1 more foot on each side with the bath chair.

- no shower door is nice but be aware that PALS chill very fast.

When they get cold the muscle tone increases so you will want to keep the shower space warm enough to avoid chilling.

- if you choose to have a door try to get one with a 180* swing so you can open it into or out of the shower space depending on your equipment needs.

- one other consideration for the shower—if your PALS gets congested from a cold the warm steamy environment of the shower may help loosen the secretions and assist with coughing them out more easily. (Actual steam showers are great for this but somewhat spendy)

- having a non-fixed shower head is great and also grab bars in both the horizontal and vertical placement is helpful near the shower head.

- hard floors are the best for the wheelchair but are fairly hard on the caregiver. Get some of the floor mats for exercise (usually 4'x4' squares) that are easy to move so your CALS can have a soft spot to stand when assist with daily things like shaving, tooth brushing, massage, ROM etc.... (BTW a yoga mat work great too!)

- motion activated light switches in key areas are very nice especially if they are relatively dim at night.

- keeping light switches and thermostats at about 36-48" from the floor will allow better access to your PALS in the wheelchair

- we want to re-iterate Dan's comment regarding "ADA requirements"—set your space up for your PALS/CALS not a random average disabled person. You will use it every day!

- one other thing we did that surprised me was paving. Having a paved area outside for the PALS to ride in the wheelchair is so awesome! I didn't realize how hard it is to stay upright on the gravel in a wheelchair when your torso muscles will no longer support you effectively.