



**@CARE**  
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OCTOBER 2017



# NEWSLETTER

## FROM CARE FINDER



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CELEBRATE YOUR SILVER YEARS



**@Care salutes every senior citizen on the occasion of The International Day of Older Persons.** Observed every year on October 1st, ever since the resolution was passed by The United Nations General Assembly in 1990, this is the day dedicated to commemorating the most experienced members of our society-our senior citizens. From 1991, this day honours the contributions made by them, while at the same time raising awareness about the issues that affect them, such as abuse and senescence.

The theme of this year's International Day of Older Persons is:

*"Stepping into the future: Tapping the contributions, talents and participation of older persons in society."*

Our elders have a part to play in our society. This year's theme envisions a future where they actively participate in the cultural, political, economic and social aspects of the community. We are pleased to note that our very own Chennai saw a number of programs being conducted by several organizations, to mark this occasion.

### **@Care: On the path of empowering the elderly!**

Aging is an inevitable part of life, and to do so gracefully requires tremendous levels of planning. This is where the efforts of the @Care News Team comes into play!

At Carefinder, we believe that every senior citizen can, and should, live life to the fullest. These are your golden years, and you have undoubtedly earned the right to enjoy them! With a bit of help from our side, you can live as independently as you wish, regardless of how many years you have tucked away under that belt! We are constantly on the lookout for the means by which our elders may live within the comfort and security of their own home.

We were amazed by the tremendous response that the previous issues of our newsletter generated. Many of our readers were enthralled to read about the accomplishments of the septuagenarian Chef- Mrs. Chitra Viswanathan, whose innovative OPOS method was highlighted in the September issue. The touching story of how digitization awakened and renewed long-lost family ties has also struck a chord amongst our readers.

Apart from the praises and warm wishes, our team has also received several queries, most of which deal with the unique set of requirements that senior citizens possess. These have come from not just older adults living by themselves, but also from caregivers who have been entrusted with their care.

While sorting through all the feedback, a few topics caught our eye, primarily because it dealt with some of the fundamental issues that concern the elderly. We then decided to take an in-depth look at these, and publish our findings through our newsletter.

In our **October issue**, we have turned our focus to two pressing problems that the elderly face, when it comes to living independently.

The *first* feature deals with the need to rethink toilet-concepts for the elderly. Bathrooms are a necessary feature in all homes. However, when it comes to senior citizens, bathrooms assume a greater level of importance. Often, the very dignity of our elders is at stake when this issue crops up. They require bathrooms that offer privacy and safety, and are easy-to-use, while at the same time capable of catering to all their needs with minimal hassle.

The *second* one concerns the need for modifying homes and shows how to convert them into safe and secure ones, enabling the elderly to go about their daily routines without the fear of accidents.

We hope that by throwing light on the various ways by which homes, and bathrooms in particular, can be made more senior-friendly, we will be able to help all those who wish to live their lives independently and safely in their own home.

Before we sign off, we would once again like to express our gratitude for all the positive feedback we have received so far, thereby encouraging us to work harder and more diligently.

Remember- We love hearing from you! So, send us your suggestions and ideas!

**Let's make life a lot more safer for our loved ones!**

P.S. Srikumar

Editor

@Carefinder

Till around two months ago, Mrs. Lakshmi lived as independently, more or less, as any septuagenarian could. Usually, her neighbours would wake up to find her busily pottering about her neat and picturesque backyard, carefully tending to the small vegetable garden that was her pride and joy. A robust woman, this 75-year old would complete most of her household chores before midday, without depending on the services of a maid. Her evenings were dedicated to prayer and exercise, the latter being in the form of a leisurely walk around the small bylanes near her home. This had been her routine, one that she had steadfastly adhered to for more than a decade.

*This idyllic existence was shattered one fateful day.*

A slip in the bathroom was all that it took to reduce this wonderful, healthy woman into a wheelchair-bound invalid. Today, as Mrs. Lakshmi slowly recuperates from the painful fracture she endured, her children are thankful, for it could have been much worse than this.

Every year, countless people succumb to injuries caused by accidents that occur within the home, especially on slippery surfaces found in bathrooms. Often, a few seconds is all that it takes to transform an active and independent lifestyle, into a miserable one filled with pain, compelling the victim to become dependant on the mercy of others.

In the above case, Mrs. Lakshmi's woes did not end with the fall and subsequent treatment. Her routine was wrecked! Tasks that were once commonplace, like taking a bath, had now become impossible to accomplish, without the help of caregivers. Indeed, this is a scenario that many in the elderly community face. In such situations, it becomes necessary to make a few adjustments that enable the elderly and their caregivers to perform routine tasks, without much of a hassle.

Let's take a look at how one of the most important rooms in the house-the bathroom-can be made more senior-friendly.

### **Safety plus ease in accessibility: Two sides of the same coin**

Often, for senior citizens, a visit to the bathroom can be a difficult experience, especially if they are recuperating from injury, or suffering from muscular and joint pain. The situation is much worse for those who are bedridden, and are completely immobile. In such cases, it becomes necessary to bring in certain modifications to the layout and fixtures of the bathroom, and perhaps even to the entire routine, so as to satisfy the basic needs of the elderly.

The bathroom needs to be safe, so that the elderly (and, for that matter, anybody) may use it without the fear of slipping and falling. It also needs to be made more user-friendly, enabling those who have lost their strength and mobility, to make use of the toilet without any needless worry or embarrassment.

After undertaking extensive research that also includes recommendations from experts, we have been able to compile a list of the changes/modifications that we feel ought to be implemented in order to make bathrooms more comfortable for seniors.

#### **1. Spacious bathrooms**

It's quite tedious to move around a bathroom while in a wheelchair. This hurdle can be overcome by increasing the space of the bathroom, and by keeping the middle of the bathroom floor uncluttered. This will allow easier access to the toilet, wash-basin and bathtub, and will also give caregivers the space they need to help the ones under their care.

#### **2. Slip-resistant floors**

Floors need to be made non-slippery. To achieve this, one may either replace existing tiles with anti-skid bathroom tiles, or alternatively install a non-slip rubber mat that covers the entire floor. Also, make sure that the floor is levelled, without any sort of difference in height.

### 3. Comfortable toilets

It is vital to install a toilet that doesn't place too much of stress on the joints and muscles while squatting to relieve oneself. Often, a commode may have to be replaced with one that has been designed exclusively for the elderly. An alternate, and economical route is to either opt for portable commodes that can be set up at a convenient spot (especially advantageous for people who are unable to walk to the bathroom) or buy Seat Extenders that raise the commode's height several inches higher. This offers a greater level of privacy to those afflicted with mobility issues and will enable them to sit and use the toilet independently, comfortably and painlessly. However, make sure that the seat extenders are safely clamped and fitted properly.

### 4. Better hygiene with bidets

Cleaning up after using the toilet becomes much more simpler by using a bidet. Bidets are devices that send a steady and controlled jet of water to clean one's private parts. Nowadays, it's quite common to see toilets that incorporate bidets. Also, one may buy hand-held bidets, also called a bidet shower or toilet spray, that can be installed alongside the toilet.

### 5. Easy-to-use taps and wash basins

Wash basins need to be placed at an appropriate height and position, allowing access to even those who move about in wheelchairs. While selecting taps, it might be best to opt for the ones that use lever handles, with the hot and cold water options clearly marked. This will require minimal effort, than the conventional ones that need to be turned to operate. Nowadays, it's also possible to purchase foot-operated taps, that function with the use of a pedal.

### 6. Install grab rails and bars

Installing grab rails and bars is one of the most easiest and cost-effective means of making the bathroom senior-friendly. Grab rails can be fitted on walls, on the sides of the commode and even on the exterior and interior surfaces of the tub or shower. This will help the elderly to move about the bathroom, without the risk of a fall.

**Please note:** The grab bars need to be sturdy, capable of supporting the weight of the person, and have an anti-slip coating.

### 7. Better lights

Most senior citizens suffer from impaired vision. To an extent, this hurdle can be overcome by installing brighter lights in the bathroom, enabling them to see better.

### 8. Easy-to-access tubs & showers

If you are trying to create a separate bathing space, it might be wise to install a tub that allows the elderly to get in easily. Try to purchase one that comes with a shower seat, enabling the elderly to sit while having a bath. Make sure that the floor of the tub is made of anti-skid materials. Also, install a shower-head with a flexible hose extension.

### 9. Rugs

Rugs are essential to soak up any water that may have spilled over, and also to make sure that the feet are dry after having had a bath. Make sure to purchase rugs that have an anti-slip coating at the back, so that they stay firmly in place. Thicker rugs are a boon for caregivers who may use them to cushion their knees while helping their wards.

### 10. Easy-to-reach storage shelves/racks

Make sure to install storage shelves that can hold common bathroom items like soap, shampoo, etc. at a position & height that is easily accessible.

## 11. Smart toilets and bathrooms

Technology has progressed at incredible speeds, bringing forth several innovations that could bring greater ease and comfort to the lives of the elderly. Some of the latest set of gadgets taking the world by storm are those that help make bathrooms smarter. With the use of motion and heat sensors, manual tasks like turning on the lights and taps, flushing the toilet, etc. can be automated, thereby making them effortless.

## 12. Bathroom design for persons with memory disorders

While incorporating the above suggestions, it becomes necessary to make a few additional changes to the bathroom, so as to help those who have been afflicted with memory disorders like Dementia and Alzheimer's. Some of the modifications suggested by experienced caregivers are as follows:

- Keep the colour of the bathroom door different from that of other doors and the walls, thereby enabling easy identification.
- Remove the locks from the bathroom doors. Many a time, people suffering from such disorders forget how to unlock the doors.
- Hang a sign on the bathroom door that clearly indicates that it is the bathroom.
- Install wide double-doors for bathrooms that enable caregivers to push it open in case of emergencies.
- Make sure the pathway leading to the toilet is brightly lit. Installing floor lights also helps.
- To ensure better access to the bathroom, attach grab rails on the wall leading to the toilet.
- If the floors have a slope, make sure to affix fluorescent stickers on them, indicating the incline.

### A few tips

- ▶ If you live in a multi-storey house, make sure the bathroom designated for the elderly is situated on the ground-floor, and is close to their bedroom. This will enable them to easily access it, even during the night.
- ▶ It is absolutely vital to ensure that the bathroom door can be opened from the outside as well. This feature is necessary, especially when the person within the bathroom is in any form of distress.
- ▶ Install easy-to-use bathroom door handles, that can be operated by those afflicted with joint disorders, like arthritis.
- ▶ Install a switch or voice-operated alarm that alerts caregivers if the elderly find themselves in distress while inside the bathroom. One may even extend the phone connection to the bathroom, enabling people to call for help in case of emergencies.

By incorporating these ideas, we hope that it will make a huge difference in the lives of senior citizens, enabling them to perform one of nature's most routine and basic tasks.

Senior-friendly homes are a necessity in this day and age, especially with the increase in the number of independently-living seniors.

Consider the case of Mr. Shastri. The 64-year old staunch bachelor is now recuperating from a twisted ankle. A sprained ankle is not a serious issue for a 20 or 30-year old. However, for the elderly, the case is quite different as even such minor injuries take time to heal. Apart from the physiological problems, they will have to also deal with the psychological impact. Many a time, such falls create fears and phobias that could ultimately lead to the victim retreating towards a more sedentary, and consequently unhealthy routine.

*Mr. Shastri's predicament is not an isolated one.*

Every year, hundreds of seniors suffer from accidents in and around their homes. The saddest part is that most of these accidents are caused by falls that could have been easily avoided by taking the necessary precautions. Just like how homes are baby-proofed to keep young infants safe, similarly, a few modifications might be required in order to make homes Senior-Safe.

Listed below are a few quick fixes that can be implemented to make homes more senior-friendly.

### **1. Install sturdy grab rails & bars**

Grab rails are essential, especially on the walls, in the areas that are prone to be slippery. Thus, it is necessary to get these fixed in the kitchen and bathroom. Also, it might be a good idea to install one that runs alongside the staircase, giving additional support to the elderly as they climb up and down the stairs.

### **2. Get rid of door saddles**

A feature that is often seen in older homes, a door saddle is the raised portion, made of wood or stone, that is found under a door jamb, and is usually used to separate rooms when the doors are open. Tripping over a door saddle is an accident that is waiting to happen. This accident typically occurs when people are in haste, or are moving about in the dark. It is wise to completely get rid of such obstacles.

### **3. Opt for appropriate furniture**

Choose chairs and beds with the proper height. Apart from increasing comfort, this will ensure that the elderly do not fall while sitting or sleeping.

### **4. Install alarms**

Today, it has become absolutely vital to install different kinds of alarms around the house. Smoke alarms warn if anything has caught fire, burglar alarms notify the threat of intruders, while panic buttons or emergency alarms alert caregivers if the elderly are in any sort of distress. Make it a point to install phones in all the main areas of the home.

Apart from this, also consider decluttering your home. Too many furniture, slippery rugs, and any sort of litter on the floor, increases the chances of tripping and falling. Get rid of items that no longer have a use.

By incorporating these ideas, we hope that unfortunate incidents, like that of Mr. Shastri and countless others, are averted, enabling seniors to live safely within the comfort of their own homes.

# BATHROOM SAFETY TIPS

Replace towel holder rail with handrail.

Improve lighting, put in a night light and/or motion activated LED lighting.

Keep spare medical alert pendant near toilet, and/or medical alert emergency wall communicator in tub/toilet area.

Taller toilet seat

A sturdy plastic seat for shower or tub, plus a hand-held shower nozzle for bathing while sitting down.

Put non slip grippers in tub floor & use non slip floor mats.

## ABOUT CARE FINDER

One of the most worrying aspects of having aged loved ones living alone is the process of finding the right care providers. This task is often difficult, as many factors have to be taken into consideration, chief of which is safety. Care Finder was begun to remedy this situation. We make it easy for you to make important decisions by presenting all the vital information that will be required to do so.

You can relax by accepting the specialised services offered by Care Finder. Be it healthcare professionals, documentation experts, property management consultants, etc., we boast of an exhaustive network of the best service providers, who excel in their area of expertise, and specifically cater to the needs of the elderly. With our help, you can discover a storehouse of customised services for senior citizens. We help the elderly explore new opportunities, learn and pick up new skills through our wide range of programs.

When you want the best for your parents, come to Care Finder. We help you express your love and concern better. Peace of mind guaranteed !!

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