

ASK GENIE

By Genie Nowicki



Q: What is the first thing I should do to make my home safer for aging in place?

GN: I would recommend starting with grab bars for safety and comfort. They're available in every style and finish and some even look like towel bars so there's no need for the "aesthetic" objection anymore.

They don't look like commercial grab bars. They should be installed in tubs, showers and other areas where they are helpful. For example, I've installed them in closets to assist with balance while dressing. They are great for stability and injury related needs but also convenient for daily functions such as shaving your legs.

Grab Bars can be installed without a remodel using special mounting hardware that is readily available (a couple of options: Wingits or Delta Grab Bar mounts both for "non-stud mounting.")

These are not the same as expansion or molly bolts that you would use to hang a mirror or piece of art. These special mounts are not necessary during a remodel where the contractor has access to install solid wood blocking in the walls.

One last note: it's important that grab bars are properly installed and attached to wood framing or with the correct mounts so that they hold in the event of a fall.

Q: I've heard that better lighting is important but I have recessed can lights and I am not remodeling. Is there a way to improve that type of lighting?

GN: Good news! Thanks to new technology most of those recessed can lights can be improved without a remodel. There are new LED conversion kits that give you improved lighting and longevity as well.

This is a better solution than just changing the light bulbs. An electrician can replace the existing fluorescent or incandescent trim and lighting module with a new integrated LED unit without touching the sheetrock.

These fixtures can provide as much as 1,000 Lumens (so you will want a dimmer switch!) and are available in color temperatures to suit your home. I'm having all of my fluorescent can lights changed to LED – can't wait!

Q: I've been hearing about comfort height toilets? Is that something you would recommend?

GN: Comfort height toilets have become very popular as we've all adjusted to using the taller toilets we find in commercial bathrooms (restaurants, airports, etc.).

Standard toilets are usually 15" to 16" high. Comfort height toilets are generally 17" to 18" high which is more comfortable and easier to use for many people.

Of course, this depends on your height so give that some thought. It's a simple change for a plumber to remove your toilet and install a new comfort height toilet in the same location. It will also give you the opportunity to get a "soft close" seat and a lower flow toilet that meets the current water conservation code.

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