

The bedroom is the living space where many individuals spend a large majority of their time while in their residences. Individuals with disabilities may encounter some difficulties in maneuvering, performing daily activities, and/or accessing furniture. There are many strategies, adaptations, and technologies that can assist an individual in the bedroom. Bedrooms should be designed for comfort, accessibility, and functionality.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

What considerations should be made regarding aesthetics and function of accessible beds?

Some individuals with disabilities require turning from side to side every 2 to 4 hours as a preventative measure in decubiti (pressure ulcers) care. Others may need to sleep in a semi-“sitting” position for other reasons such as bronchial problems. Although significant or complete reduction in assistant care may not always be possible, greater independence and flexibility can be achieved through the use of motorized adjustable beds and hospital beds. This technology can also be beneficial to the personal assistant. There are a few differences between adjustable beds and hospital beds.

An adjustable bed looks and feels like a regular bed and comes in various common sizes, i.e. twin, full, queen, etc. In addition, the head and feet can raise or lower to individualized comfort levels. There are also models capable of tilting, massaging and heating. The mattresses may be made of visco-elastic foam, air-filled, latex, and/or coil materials. These kinds of beds are aesthetically pleasing and easy to match with existing décor.

Hospital beds typically can be paid for by insurance and these purchases are usually processed with little difficulty. The choice in size is limited and it looks like a hospital bed. However, hospital beds have one feature not characteristically found in adjustable beds without significantly altering the price. The entire bed can raise and lower to accommodate preferences for transfers and assistant care.

There are also beds that can assist in relieving pressure. These beds may be beneficial to individuals who have pain, are susceptible to pressure sores or decubiti, have certain skin disorders, or have circulation problems. Net suspension, lateral tilting, low air loss, fluidisation, and water mattresses are all types of pressure relieving beds.

Here are a few other things to consider when looking at beds:

- Waterproof or moisture resistant mattresses or covers
- Bedrails or safety enclosures (e.g., netting)
- Bed risers (blocks that can be put under the bed feet to adjust the height)
- Specialized pillows
- Wedges or other positioning cushions
- Specialized bed sheets or coverings
- Footboards to reduce sliding
- Frames or devices to lift the bed sheets or coverings off a person's legs

Are there any specialized alarm clocks?

Waking up and getting ready on time is crucial to maintaining employment. Depending on the severity and nature of the disability, there are several options available for alarm clocks. The two main parts of an alarm clock are the display and the alarm. Displays come in many different sizes, formats, and colors. Large number displays or clocks that announce the time with the press of a button can be helpful to individuals who have difficulty seeing the time. If an individual is unable to change positions to see the clock, there are projection displays that can shine the time on any flat surface (i.e., a ceiling or a wall). For waking, there are clocks with vibration/bed shaking, flashing lights, and/or amplified buzzing. These alarm enhancers can also be purchased separately to work with many existing alarm clocks.

What kind of equipment can an individual use to get in and out of bed?

As with most assistive technology, functional capabilities, individual needs, flexibility and personal preferences will determine what kind of product will accomplish the desired task. For individuals with good upper body strength, the standard hospital bed trapeze (a metal frame with a hanging overhead support bar for repositioning) may be an appropriate accessory to purchase. Trapezes can be adapted to fit an adjustable or standard bed frame. Other examples of low cost assistive technology may include the transfer handle, standing pole, bed rope ladder, or transfer boards.

Options are available for bed transfers that offer safety, support, dignity and in some instances, independence. From hand-powered hydraulic lifts to track lifts, possibilities exist that can address the needs of various levels of functional capabilities and caregiver support. The key is to search for the product that offers the features that are needed, while considering the personal preferences of the individual using it. This should include feedback from significant partners and personal assistants.

What are some types of lift systems available to assist in transfers in the bedroom?

There are a number of lift systems for the bedroom and throughout the home. Generally speaking, these systems will lift the individual from the bed either by using two steel arms that go underneath the arms or by having the individual sit on webbing material that supports the hips and legs. Lifts can assist in transporting an individual to a wheelchair or to another room if desired. Lifts may be portable boom lifts or overhead track lifts. Portable boom lifts are mounted in a floor socket or on a rolling dolly. The boom lift is raised and lowered by another person who operates a control box. Boom lifts for the bedroom can be battery-powered or

electrical. Overhead track lifts have slings that slide in a track system mounted in the ceiling. They are powered for lifting and lowering, and some systems have power features for traveling along the track. The user or another person can control the track lift via a control box. However, track lifts may require reinforcements to existing ceilings. They are also more expensive due to material and labor costs required.

What are some strategies for making a closet more useful and accessible?

Arranging the closet for height, vision, motor, and/or cognitive considerations is a multi-step process that may involve adjusting shelves, labeling clothing or other apparel (with tactile pins or barcodes), organizing items based on type of clothing or sequence of dressing, creating and displaying checklists or visual cues, and positioning dressing sticks or other AT for dressing. Rolling carts with drawers or bins can be used to store apparel at an accessible height. Having a chair or bench close to or in the closet can be helpful for individuals who need to sit when dressing. Sliding doors can enable individuals with limited strength to open and close doors and facilitate easy access for individuals in wheelchairs. Proper lighting, height-appropriate mirrors, and connecting a closet to the bathroom or vanity area are other options to consider.

What types of products can assist a person with dressing?

There are a variety of products that can assist with getting dressed. For shoes and socks, there are extra long shoehorns and sock pullers. These items can assist an individual in pulling on socks and/or shoes without having to bend over. Elastic shoelaces can be put on shoes to make them easier to slip on and off while remaining tied. A dressing stick can assist an individual in pulling garments on and off. Button loop devices are inserted through the buttonhole and hook the button allowing the individual to pull the button thru the buttonhole. Some individuals find it useful to replace buttons with Velcro or to purchase specialized clothing that is designed to be easier to put on and remove.

Are there products to assist a person in making the bed?

Yes, there are items that can be used that will assist you in making up a bed. A reacher is a great product for reaching the sheet and/or blanket and then pulling it across the bed. The reacher will also assist in picking up pillows off the ground or across the bed.

Are there devices to help an individual control lights, televisions or other appliances from a bed?

These types of devices are referred to as environmental aids to daily living (EADLs) or environmental control units (ECUs). There are several basic products that can be purchased at retail stores that enable an individual to turn a single electrical appliance (e.g., lights, fans, radios, etc.) on and off with a handheld remote control. There are also products available at specialty stores (e.g., Radio Shack) and through web sites that can control multiple appliances at once through a mounted switch control or a remote control. Most EADLs and ECUs can be configured and adapted for control by any individual, as long as that person can perform a consistent and volitional movement or action (through muscle, breath, voice, or brain waves). Some individuals use a communication device or other AT equipment to access EADL or ECU capabilities. More extensive and complex systems are available that work through home wiring systems, computers, or telephone lines.

What kind of safety equipment is available for the bedroom?

Safety in the bedroom may include standard safety equipment (e.g., smoke detectors), adapted safety equipment, and alerting or monitoring systems. Here are some things to consider regarding safety in the bedroom:

- Flashing or vibrating smoke and/or carbon monoxide detectors.
- Pagers that can connect to smoke, carbon monoxide, or intruder detectors.
- Auditory monitoring systems (e.g., baby monitors) or walkie-talkies.
- Video monitoring systems.
- Alerting or call button devices (to get the attention of another person)
- Specialized phone equipment or monitored alerting systems for emergency calls.
- Intercom systems.

OTHER INFORMATION RESOURCES:

Assistivetech.net

Searchable Internet database for assistive technology.

<http://www.assistivetech.net>

AARP (American Association for Retired Persons)

Information on modifying and/or designing a home for universal access.

<http://www.aarp.org/universalhome/>

AgrAbility Project

Information page related to home modification products.

<http://www.agrabilityproject.org>

CarePathways

A website created and maintained by registered nurses with information on home modifications.

<http://www.carepathways.com>

Center for Universal Design

Site for the national research, information, and technical assistance center on universal design.

<http://www.design.ncsu.edu:8120/cud/>

Fairview MS Center

A link to an article related to home modifications.

<http://mscenter.fairview.org/homeaccessibility.asp>

National Resource Center on Supportive Housing and Home Modification

A website for everything related to home modifications.

<http://www.homemods.org>

PRODUCT LINKS:

Coast Medical Inc.

18305 Sutter Blvd.
Morgan Hill, CA 95037-2845
Phone: 800-821-9319; 408-776-5000
Fax: 877-213-9300
<http://www.ncmedical.com>

G.E. Miller Inc.

45 Saw Mill River Road
Yonkers, NY 10701
Phone: 800-431-2924
Fax: 800-969-3511

Maddak Inc.

6 Industrial Road
Pequannock, NJ 07440-1993
Phone: 973-628-7600
Fax: 973-305-0841
<http://www.ableware.com>

North Maxi-Aids

42 Executive Blvd
Farmingdale, NY 11735
Phone: 800-522-6294; 631-752-0521
Fax: 631-752-0689
<http://www.maxiaids.com>

Sammons Preston Inc.

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Fax: 800-547-4333
<http://www.sammonspreston.com>