

Aging Well in Place

Lesson objectives:

1. Learners will learn what “Aging in Place” means.
2. Learners will learn how to audit their home to evaluate their home safety.
3. Learners will have a better understanding if “Aging in Place” is right for them.

Extension Educator:

Kelsie Muller, MS

Purdue Extension Benton and Warren Counties

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What you need to know about “Aging in Place”

About one-fifth of the U.S. population will be 65 or older by the year 2030. The irony is that everyone wants to live a long time, and no one wants to actually be old. Most people in the boomer generation say that they want to live in their home as they age, or what is called “Age in Place”.

What is “Aging in Place”? According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) the term *age in place* refers to “the ability to live in one's own home and community safely, independently, and comfortably, regardless of age, income, or ability level”.

The key to successfully “age in place” is to be proactive rather than reactive. It’s better to plan and make decisions before a major life event occurs, such as a stroke, or fall that causes a rehabilitation effort.

Benefits of Aging in Place

- Helps older adults keep autonomy
- Can be less costly than formal care
- Improve social connectedness
- Maintain comfortability

Home Audit

How does your home measure up?

Taking an inventory of your home and living space can help you decide to remain in your home or make proactive decisions in your home design approach moving forward.

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Check any of these that present a challenge:

Entry:

- Climbing up the stairs to the front door
- Going down the stairs from the front door
- Unlocking the front door
- Having a place to set items down while tending to operating the door
- Using the doorknob
- Reaching and getting to the mailbox
- Maneuvering over the threshold of the door
- Ability to see who is at the door
- Hearing the doorbell

Hallways and Inside Doors:

- Opening and going through doors to rooms
- Using door knobs
- Moving between flooring surfaces
- Seeing because of inadequate lighting
- Turning on lights in the areas being approached

Living or Family Rooms:

- Entering living area
- The room is too dark
- There is not enough color contrast between items to be distinguishable
- Glare that hampers visibility
- Using electrical outlets
- Difficulty in opening and closing drapes or shades
- Monitoring heating and cooling
- Moving around living area
- Entertaining guests
- Opening and closing doors or windows
- Tripping hazards with rugs, magazine racks, etc.

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Bedroom:

- Entering and exiting
- Privacy
- Turning lights on and off
- Using electrical outlets
- Seeing because of inadequate lighting
- Opening and closing windows, drapes or blinds
- Using the closet
- Seeing because of glare
- Mirror placement
- Tripping because of rugs
- Flooring difficulties with walker, slipping, or wheelchair
- Communication
- Not enough color contrasts

Kitchen:

- Trouble reaching switches, such as the garbage disposal
- Trouble reaching outlets
- Opening and closing windows
- Opening and closing shades and curtains
- Rugs and other tripping hazards
- Trouble using/reaching water faucet or taps
- Opening cans or bottles
- Taking out the trash
- Adequate room for a wheelchair or walker

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- Trouble cleaning and having the appropriate flooring
- Inadequate lighting
- Lighting glare
- Not enough color contrast to maneuver items

Bathroom:

- Entering and exiting
- Privacy
- Turning lights off and on
- Electrical outlet use
- Using the sink
- Using the toilet
- Using the shower/bathtub
- Opening and closing the window
- Slipping on flooring surfaces
- Communication



Is “Aging in Place” right for you?

After completing the home audit you should have a better idea of where there may be some challenges in your home. Challenges that could impact safety and activities of daily living. Now take some time to consider these other important questions that you need to consider:

1. Will your home need to be modified to accommodate potential mobility concerns?
2. What might the estimated cost be to making any home modifications?
3. How will you maintain your home and yard when daily physical activity becomes more challenging?
4. What might your transportation needs be and how will you safely get from place to place?
5. What will you do to make sure someone is alerted if you fall and cannot get up on your own?

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6. If you become unable to perform activities of daily living (ADL) who will provide support?
7. If you require facility-based rehab care following an unexpected injury, such as a fall, do you know what is available in your area?

There is a lot to consider. Talk with someone you trust about all of your options, wishes, and concerns. Make the most informed decision that you can and ask for help. “Aging in Place” may not be the best option for everyone and that’s okay too.

Lesson adapted with permission from Cydney Martin, Santa Fe County Extension New Mexico State University Extension.

Looking for more resources on this topic?

<https://www.uaex.edu/life-skills-wellness/aging/HousingOptionsHandout1.pdf>

<https://extension.sdstate.edu/news/your-home-aging-place-ready>

https://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/_f/F125.pdf