

# Home Safety: Solutions for Aging in Place

**Spring 2021**

**Presented by Friends Life Care  
Care Coordinators**

**Kiersten Dortone, OTR/L, CAPS, ECHM**

**Ellen Houle, OTR/L**

**Nancy Thomas, OTR/L, CAPS**



# Home Safety: Solutions for Aging in Place

## An Ideal Home to Age in Place

**Nancy Thomas, OTR/L, CAPS**

# Aging in Place

## Definition

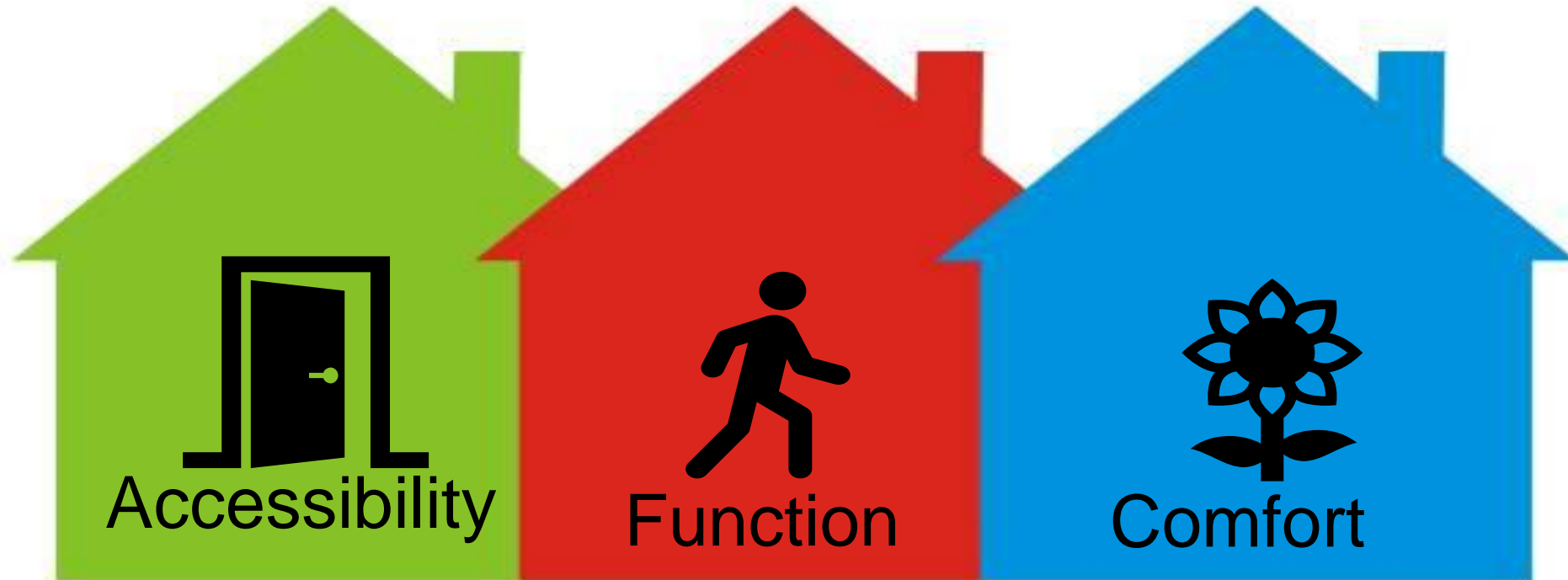
- Ability of any person, regardless of age, income, or ability level to reside in their home and community safely, independently, and comfortably. (CDC, 2009)

# Aging in Place

- AARP survey of adults shows that 3 out of 4 adults age 50 and older want to stay in their homes and communities as they age—yet many don't see that happening for them.
- One in three homeowners reports that major modifications to their home are needed to accommodate aging needs.

# Home Sweet Home

## Independence



# SAFETY

Let's see what you know today.

# Test Your Knowledge

## Safety and Falls

What percentage of older adults fall each year?

- 10%
- 25%
- 50%

# Test Your Knowledge

## Safety and Falls

After one fall, what is the likelihood for repeating a fall?

- Less likely
- The same
- More likely



# Test Your Knowledge

## Safety and Falls

In 2020, what was the most reported place FLC members fell?

- Bathroom
- Bedroom
- Stairs

# Safety & Falls

- One in four adults fall every year. <sup>1</sup>
- 3 million older people are treated in emergency departments for fall injuries. <sup>2</sup>
- Once you fall, you double your chance of falling again. <sup>3</sup>



# Falls Are Serious!

- One out of five falls causes a serious injury such as broken bones or a head injury. <sup>4, 5</sup>
- More than 95% of hip fractures are caused by falling. <sup>6</sup>
- Falls are the most common cause of traumatic brain injuries (TBI). <sup>7</sup>

# Deciding Which Changes to Make

- Universal Design
- Inclusive for ALL

# Deciding Which Changes to Make

- Consider the current medical conditions, that you and/or your spouse/partner might have for example:
- One of you is a diabetic and is experiencing neuropathy, you may want to install grab bars near the shower.
- Or spouse/partner has COPD and becomes out of breath going up and down steps, you may want to consider a bathroom on first floor.

# Be proactive, not reactive!



# Home Safety: Solutions for Aging in Place

## Risk Factors for Aging in Place

Ellen Houle, OTR/L

# Risk Factors for Aging in Place

- What are the most common risk factors impacting safety and function in your home?
- How does it impact your everyday life?
- How does it impact your safety?
- Be proactive and open to change.



# Vision

- Common causes of visual deficits: Age Related Macular Degeneration, Cataracts, Glaucoma, Diabetic Retinopathy, Dementia, Stroke
- Symptoms: Blurry or cloudy vision, dark spots, central or peripheral vision loss, sensitivity to light/glare, inability to distinguish depth perception, decreased acuity

# Vision

## Recommendations

- CDC recommends annual eye exam
- Reduce glare
- Increase scanning of environment
- Contrasting colors
- Visual and Tactile Cues
- Home Accessibility



# Balance

## What is causing poor balance?

- **Vestibular Deficit:** Vertigo , Age related Vestibular changes
- **Neurological :** Neuropathy, Parkinson's, Stroke
- **Dizziness:** Syncope, Orthostatic Hypotension, Medications, Dehydration
- **Musculoskeletal:** Decreased strength, Arthritic changes, Leg length discrepancy

# Balance

## Recommendations

- Body mechanics:
  - Avoid quick turns, avoid backing up
  - Sitting vs. standing
- Home accessibility updates
- OT/PT consult
- Assess medications
- Assess nutrition, hydration, blood pressure
- Vestibular rehabilitation

# Chronic Disease and Aging

- Age related changes or diagnosis impacting body systems: cardiovascular, pulmonary, bowel/bladder, musculoskeletal (Diabetes, Heart Disease, Lung Disease, Incontinence, Arthritis)
- Common symptoms: fatigue, decreased endurance, shortness of breath, pain, anxiety, bowel or bladder urgency/frequency/incontinence

# Chronic Disease and Aging

## Recommendations

- Energy conservation – sitting vs standing, pre-plan activities
- Home health aide
- Bowel/Bladder program
- Home accessibility updates

# Musculoskeletal Diagnosis

## Effect on Aging

- Arthritis, spinal stenosis, decreased strength, frailty, carpal tunnel, tendonitis, compression fractures, osteoporosis
- Symptoms: pain, poor posture, fatigue, poor balance

### Ergonomics

How are sitting or sleeping?

Lifting?

Reaching?

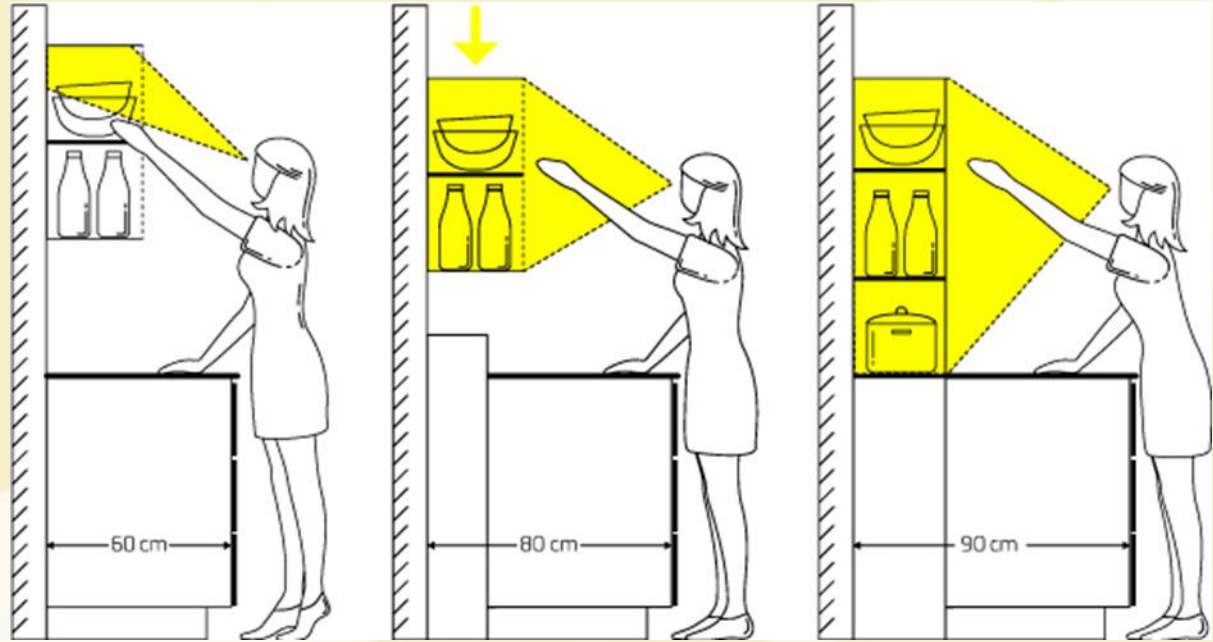
Your posture?



# Musculoskeletal Diagnosis

## Recommendations

- Re-evaluate furniture
- Organize cabinets /shelves
- Body mechanics
- Home accessibility updates
- Adaptive devices



# Hearing Loss

## Effects on Aging

- Causes: age (Presbycusis), noise exposure, genetics
- How does hearing impact your risk for falls?
- John Hopkins Study: even mild hearing loss increased 3 times risk of falls
  - decreased awareness to environment
  - increased cognitive load

# Hearing Loss

## Recommendations

- Annual audiology exam
- Wear hearing aides and keep them maintained
- Attention to task and surroundings
- Reduce clutter
- Keep pathways clear

# Cognitive Impairment

- Dementia: Alzheimer's, Lewy Body, Vascular, Mixed
- Dementia: not just memory or cognitive dysfunction  
impaired: vision, balance, sensation
- Mild Cognitive Impairment
- Annual Cognitive Screening

# Cognitive Impairment

## Recommendations

- Consider OT referral for functional and safety assessment
- Assess wandering / elopement risk
- Removal of hazards
- Consider monitoring
- Consider general home environment
- Adding or removing locks

# Home Safety: Solutions for Aging in Place

## Solutions for Aging in Place

**Kiersten Dortone, OTR/L, CAPS, ECHM**

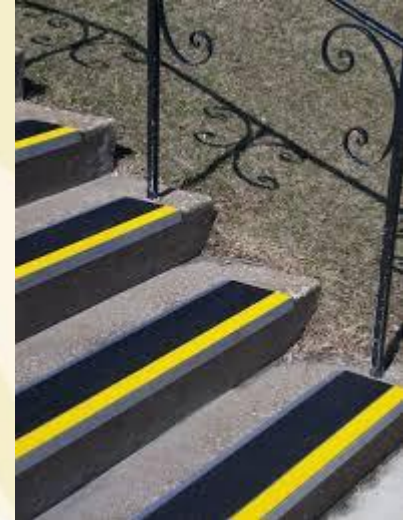
# Outdoor Area

## Solutions for Aging in Place

- Walkways check
- Steps safety
- Doorways, door lock, steps, porches, and walkways are well lit
- Maintain trees and shrubs so that they aren't overgrown near walkways



# Outdoor Area

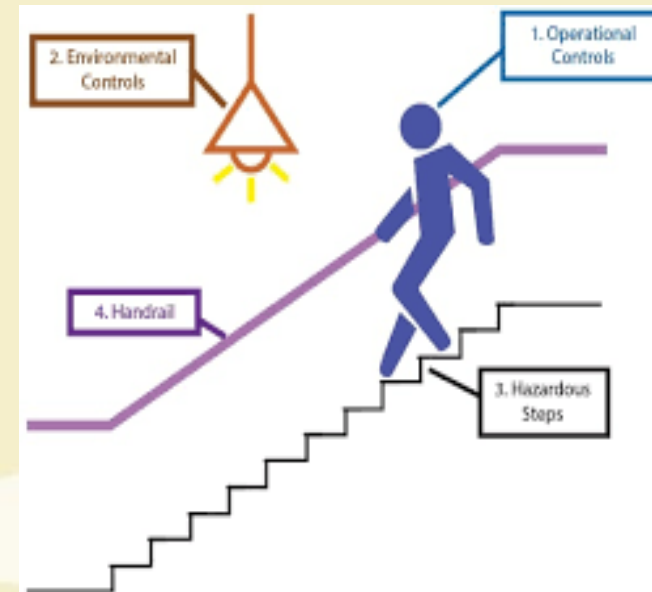


# Stairs and Steps

## Solutions for Aging in Place

- Keep objects off the stairs
- Fix loose and uneven steps
- Make sure the carpet is firmly attached
- Make sure handrails are on both sides of the stairs

# Stairs and Steps



# Floors

## Solutions for Aging in Place

- Furniture location
- Rugs and carpets
- Always keep objects off the floors
- Cords and wires



# Kitchen

## Solutions for Aging in Place

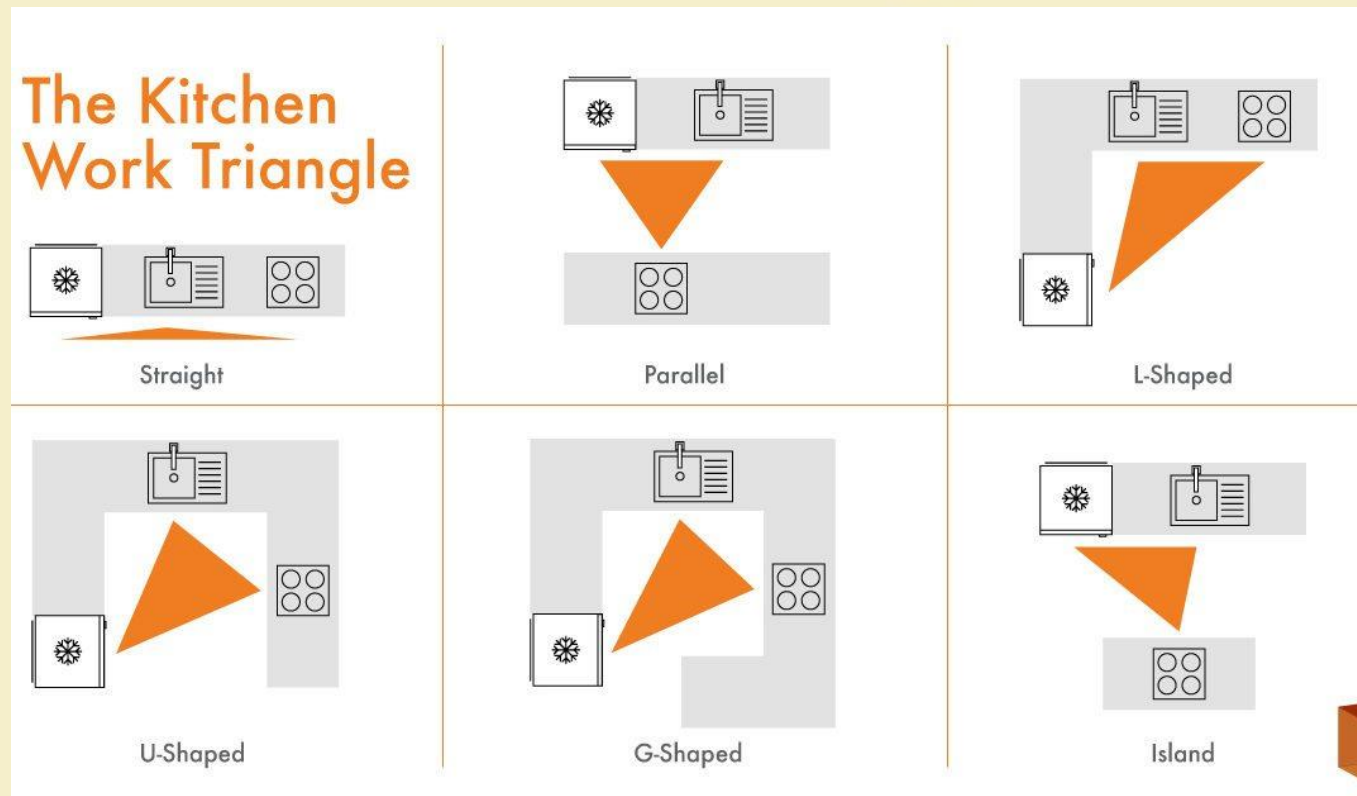
- Proper access for wheelchairs requires 42 to 48 inches of clearance for all pathways.
- Doorways should be at least 36 inches wide for the same reasons.
- Lighting for convenience and safety
- Cabinet location and functionality

# Kitchen

## Solutions for Aging in Place

- Organize cabinets
- Place your oven, sink and refrigerator to form the three hubs of your “work triangle”
- User friendly faucets
- Appliance functionality – refrigerator, oven, cooktop

# “Work Triangle”



# Appliances and Fixtures

## Solutions for Aging in Place









# Bedroom

## Solutions for Aging in Place

- Bedroom location
- Lighting and nightlights
- Eliminate clutter on floor surfaces by putting items on shelves or in storage
- Carpets and rugs
- Bedroom furniture functionality – especially the bed

# Bedroom

## Solutions for Aging in Place



# Bathroom

## Solutions for Aging in Place

- Secure rugs
- Grab bar locations
- Decrease clutter
- Consider tub/shower, shower head, seat in shower, toilet and faucets for accessibility and safety
- Lighting updates

# Bathroom

## Solutions for Aging in Place



# Bathroom

## Solutions for Aging in Place



# Bathroom

## Solutions for Aging in Place





# Wrap Up

## Solutions for Aging in Place

- Know your risk factors
- Be pro-active and open to change
- Opportunity for dialogue: talk to your health care provider

# Solutions for Aging in Place

Thank you -