

Home Sweet Dangerous Home

How a CAPS professional can help you age in your home



You've heard it. That strange, barely audible noise coming from your car. You try to ignore it and think that maybe it will just go away. But it just gets louder over time and triggers a warning light on the dashboard. That's when you realize that instead of paying for a \$150 for brake pads you have to pay \$500 for a whole new brake system because you procrastinated.

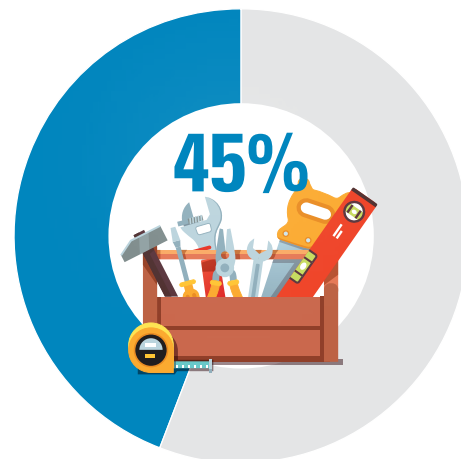
If you're planning to age in your home, procrastination could cost way more than some auto repairs. Not making necessary age-friendly modifications could result in an injury, forcing you out of your home and into assisted living or a nursing home. A Certified Aging in Place Specialist (CAPS) can help you with planning and making your home safer for aging.

What's a CAPS professional?

CAPS professionals are trained to understand the housing needs of aging people, and identify home modifications to ensure ease of mobility and safety. They can provide information about the cost and time required for remodeling projects.

They're certified by the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB). Most CAPS professionals are home remodelers, but others are health care professionals, home-care providers, architects, and designers. There are 3,500 CAPS professionals in the US today.¹

Less Than Half of Aging Homeowners Are Focused on Aging-In-Place Renovations When Remodeling



- Percent of homeowners above the age of 55 surveyed that plan to remodel or renovate in the next three years to make their homes age-friendly

Source: Home Remodeling and Your Golden Years, Consumer Reports, 8/10/16.

Why do we need CAPS professionals?

As we get older, most of us want to age in our homes, or “age in place,” rather than move to an assisted living community or a nursing home.

We’re comfortable in our homes. We like the privacy and freedom that comes with home ownership. At home, we don’t have to ask if we’re allowed to have a dog or a cat. We enjoy having enough space to enjoy time with friends and family. We don’t like the thought of being crammed into a small living place and having to get rid of lots of our stuff.

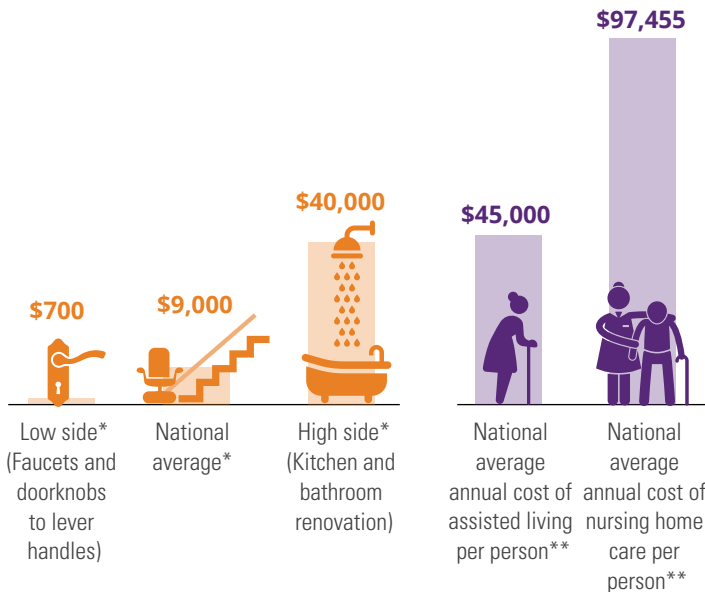
But while we want to age in our homes, we need to consider if aging in place will be safe.

Most homes aren’t built for optimal aging

Stairs, rugs, bathtubs, and poor lighting create potential for trips and falls which could result in serious injuries. While we could gradually remodel in anticipation of these challenges to make our homes safer, it’s easy to put it off until it’s too late.

Aging-In-Place Remodel—Is It Worth It?

Aging-In-Place Remodeling Costs



Even though an aging-in-place remodel might cost thousands of dollars, it may be worth it. The cost of assisted living is \$45,000, and \$97,455 per person for nursing home care.

Source: * How much does it cost to remodel to adapt a home for aging in place? Fixr.com, 3/21/17; ** Compare Long-Term Care Costs Across the United States, Genworth, 6/17

Less than half of homeowners above the age of 55 who plan to remodel or renovate in the next three years are focused on making their homes suitable for aging in place.²

It’s all too easy to sustain a serious injury, like a broken hip, in the home. More than 300,000 people are hospitalized each year from broken hips, and 95% of these fractures are a result of a fall.³ A serious injury like this can force people out of their homes and into to assisted living or a nursing home, which can result in an instant and ongoing hit to your savings.

Can I afford a CAPS professional?

Some remodelers will do an aging-in-place home assessment for free if they’re going to be doing the home modifications. If the CAPS professional isn’t a remodeler, they’ll likely charge for the home assessment. CAPS professionals are generally paid by the hour or receive a flat fee per visit or project.

The cost of aging in your home vs. an assisted living community

If you’re thinking about hiring a CAPS professional for an assessment, and possibly remodeling your home, you’re probably wondering if it’s going to be worth it financially. The national averages for aging-in-place remodeling can range from \$700 to \$40,000. But the most common remodeling jobs cost less than \$10,000.⁴

Remodeling expenses may be only a portion of the costs to age in your home. For example, if you need full-time home healthcare, it can cost almost \$50,000 a year.⁵

Even though an aging-in-place remodel might cost thousands of dollars, it may be worth it. The national average annual cost of assisted living is \$45,000, and \$97,455 per person for nursing home care.⁵

What kinds of renovations are usually required?

Renovations will be unique to your home and will depend on your age and health. Three of the most common modifications are: entrances without steps, single-floor living, and wide hallways and doorways that can accommodate wheelchairs.⁶

Below are two links that provide info on common aging in place remodeling projects:

- Fixr.com. This site includes cost estimates.
- NAHB’s Aging-in-place [checklist](http://nahb.org/en/learn/designations/certified-aging-in-place-specialist/related-resources/aging-in-place-remodeling-checklist) (nahb.org/en/learn/designations/certified-aging-in-place-specialist/related-resources/aging-in-place-remodeling-checklist)

Most people doing aging in place remodeling start with their bathrooms.. This remodel often includes installing a curb-free shower, grab bars, a universal height toilet and sink, non-slip flooring, and faucets with lever handles for easier turning. The average cost of this project is around \$9,000, but can be

higher depending on whether more space is necessary in the room to accommodate aids such as walkers or wheelchairs.⁴

To see some award-winning aging in place remodel projects visit nahb.org/en/find/award-programs/nahb-remodelers.

Sample aging-in-place projects:⁴

Project	Description	Cost
16-foot ramp	A permanent ramp that allows you to enter your home using a walker or wheelchair	\$1,600-\$3,200
Grab bars	Placing grab bars at entry points to the shower, and beside the toilet to assist in transfer	\$140 for three grab bars
Door widening	Widening doorways to at least 34 inches wide to accommodate a walker or wheelchair	\$700 per doorway
Chair lift	Allowing access to upper levels with a chair lift.	\$3,000-\$12,000
Full bathroom remodel	Complete remodel including flooring, toilet, sink, faucets, and shower	\$3,000-\$35,000
Curbless shower	Creating a barrier-free shower for walking or wheeling into	\$5,000-\$6,000
Changing faucets to those with lever handles	Making it easier for those with arthritis to turn on and off the water	\$400 each
Installing handrails on either side of steps	Assisting in safely navigating stairs	\$100 per l.f.
Installing anti-slip ADA approved American Olean bathroom flooring	Prevents slips and falls in the bathroom	\$1,300
Ceiling lift	Assisting in moving from wheelchair to bed or other seating for those with mobility issues	\$1,500-\$5,000
Walk-in tub	Making bathtubs accessible for those with mobility problems	\$5,000-\$10,000
Raising or lowering countertops and cabinets	Making the kitchen more accessible for those who have trouble bending or those who need a wheelchair	\$15,000-\$20,000
Widening hallways	Making hallways manageable for those with walkers or wheelchairs	\$800-\$1,400
Replacing windows	Making windows easier to open, shut, and clean	\$600-\$1,500 each

What Room Is the Most Popular for Aging-Related Renovations?

Homeowners over age 55 say the bathroom (48%) is the top area in the home that they have considered modifying for aging in place; a minority have considered modifying an entrance or stairway (24%), the kitchen (20%), the exterior (16%) or their overall home, including bedroom (9%).



48%
Bathroom



24%
Entrance or stairway



20%
Kitchen



16%
Home exterior



9%
Overall home

Source: 2016 Aging-in-Place Report, homeadvisor.com. Most recent data available.

Are CAPS professionals only for seniors?

Seniors who plan to age in their homes as long as possible should consider contacting a CAPS professional. But it can make sense for younger people to work with a CAPS professional because during other renovations, age-friendly modifications can usually be added for negligible costs—usually only about 5% extra.⁷

Can't I just make these renovations without a CAPS professional?

You could. There are lots of DIY aging-in-place checklists available. But you might not have the expertise to understand fully what renovations are needed now and what you might need in the future. As a result you could overlook risks that could cause injury or overspend on projects that might not be necessary.

To summarize, we've covered:

- What's a CAPS professional?
- Why do we need CAPS professionals?
- What kinds of renovations are usually required?

Don't let small problems turn into big problems

When it comes to fixing our cars, none of us like paying for expensive repairs caused by procrastination. We can put ourselves at risk by putting off aging-in-place remodeling. CAPS professionals can help you create that game plan. Then it's up to you to act on it.

Next steps

1. Download The Hartford's [Remodeling Today for a Better Tomorrow](#) guide for remodeling ideas for your kitchen and bathroom (thehartford.com/resources/mature-market-excellence/remodel). You'll find a link to a PDF at the bottom of the web page.
2. If you decide to age in your home, and want to find a CAPS professional, call the NAHB at 800-368-5242 or visit its directory page "Find a Certified Aging-in-Place Professional" at nahb.org (nahb.org/en/find/directory-designee). Click the CAPS designation in the top box to the left of the page. To further search designation holders by state, write your state's two-letter postal abbreviation in the search box.
3. Schedule an appointment with your financial advisor to discuss the cost of aging in place remodeling and its impact on your financial plan.

Sources

- ¹ Planning to Age in Place? Find a Contractor Now, The New York Times, 5/19/2017
- ² Home Remodeling and Your Golden Years, Consumer Reports, 8/10/16.
- ³ Important Facts About Falls, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2/10/17
- ⁴ How much does it cost to remodel to adapt a home for aging in place? Fixr.com, 3/21/17
- ⁵ Compare Long-Term Care Costs Across the United States, Genworth, 6/17
- ⁶ Planning to Age in Place? Find a Contractor Now, The New York Times, 5/19/2017
- ⁷ 6 Things You Must Know About Aging in Place, Kiplinger, 5/15. Most recent data available used.

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