

Home Modifications

For Fall Prevention and “Aging in Place”

Stacy Lipman OTD, OTR/L, CAPS
Occupational Therapist with Safe At
Home Program

What is a Fall?

- “any time you come to rest on a surface lower than intended”
- “move downward, typically rapidly and freely without control, from a higher to a lower level”
- What about non-falls?
 - Slips
 - Trips
 - Bobbles
 - “Near Misses”

Why do Falls Happen?

- Muscle Weakness
- Diminishing Balance
- Poly-Pharmacy
- Pain (Neurological/Orthopedic)
- Diminishing Vision
- Vertigo/Dizzyness
- Environmental conditions (Clutter, Pets, Water on floor)
- Fear
- Diminishing Cognition

How to Fall

- Try to take the hit on the fleshiest parts of your body, side of your thigh, buttocks and/or shoulder (NYT, 2017)
- “Aim for the meat, not bone,” (Inouye, 2017)
- Avoid falling onto an outstretched hand, elbow, or knee (NYT, 2017)

I Fell...What Now?

- Have plan for falling (who will you call?)
- Try to relax and normalize you breathing
- Do a head to toe check
- Call for help if needed (personal safety device)
- How to stand back up
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rBanhYs67qc>

My Loved One Fell...What Now?

- Have a plan for each other
- Help to clam them down
- Check them without moving them
- Call for help and make them comfortable on the ground (pillow, blanket, medicine)
- If you feel that you can help them up
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=10jR0zjl19Y>

Personal Safety Device

- Wearable technology which allows person to call for help after fall or medical emergency
- Monthly subscription vs through existing phone line



Life Alert



Freedom Alert

Best way to handle falls is
to PREVENT them



How Can I Prevent Falls?

- Research suggests that the best method is to use several approaches:
 - Strength and balance training
 - Talking with MDs about diminishing poly-pharmacy
 - Home Modification

Strength and Balance Training

- Physical Therapy for a “tune up”
- Exercise Classes (Water Aerobics, Tai Chi, Yoga/seated yoga, jazzercise)
- Walking (Parks, Senior Centers, School Tracks, Malls)
- Start now, create good habits
- Food for thought:
 - “A body in motion stays in motion”

A Little Bit About Balance

- Balance is a complex system at the cross roads of strength, vision, inner ear movements, and cognition.
- What affects balance?
 - General aging
 - Vision
 - Neurological conditions
 - Stroke
 - Vertigo
 - Cerebellar ataxia
 - Seizures

Poly-Pharmacy

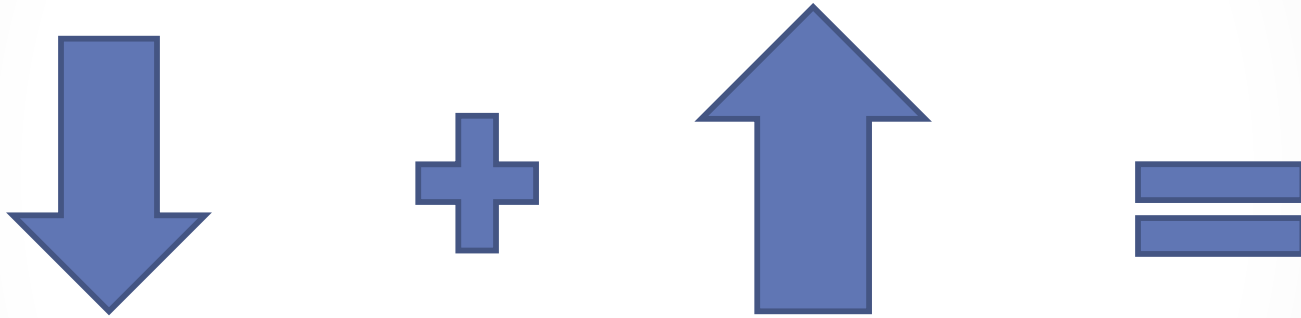
- Potential negative side effects from the interaction of prescription and over the counter medication to treat multiple medical conditions (NYT, 2015)
 - Side Effects include:
 - Dizziness
 - Grogginess
 - Increased/diminished appetite
 - Blurry Vision
 - Numbness
- Multiple MDs for each medical condition
- Hard to keep track of medication regimen
- Tell each MD what you are taking (come ready with a medication list and written questions)



Home Modification

Skills diminish with age

Improve Environment



Preventing Falls, improving “Aging in place”, enhancing safety

Home Modification

- Using your physical space to bridge the divide between your physical abilities and what you want to do
- What's unique to Washington, DC?
 - Median area housing stock was built in the 1930s-1950s
 - Lots of steps!
 - Homes built on small hills
 - Tight corners
 - Narrow Doorways
 - Small home lots

Home Modification

How to bridge the divide

- Simple
 - Grab bars
 - Improved lighting on steps
 - Lever door handles
 - Removing clutter
 - Shower chairs
 - Non-Skid mats
- Moderate
 - Widening doorways
 - Ramps
 - Stairglides
 - Tub cuts
 - Walk in Tub
- Complex
 - Building a first floor bathroom
 - Using principles of universal design to remodel kitchen
 - Building a new home with single level
 - Installing fall resistance flooring
 - Choosing kitchen tile and finishes to reduce glare

Safe at Home Program

- Grant funded home modifications with goal of “Accessibility” and “Fall Prevention”
- Joint program DCOA/DCHD
- Eligibility:
 - DC Resident
 - Household Income 80% of average median income
 - Over age 60 or 18-59 with disability
- Occupational Therapist
 - Thorough physical and home assessment
 - Collaborates with client to determine recommendations
- Contractor
 - Pre approved with experience in accessibility adaptations

Entrances

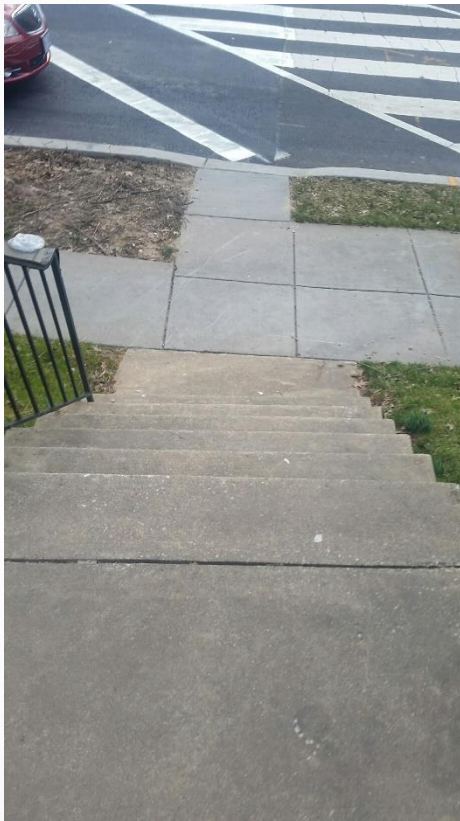


Before

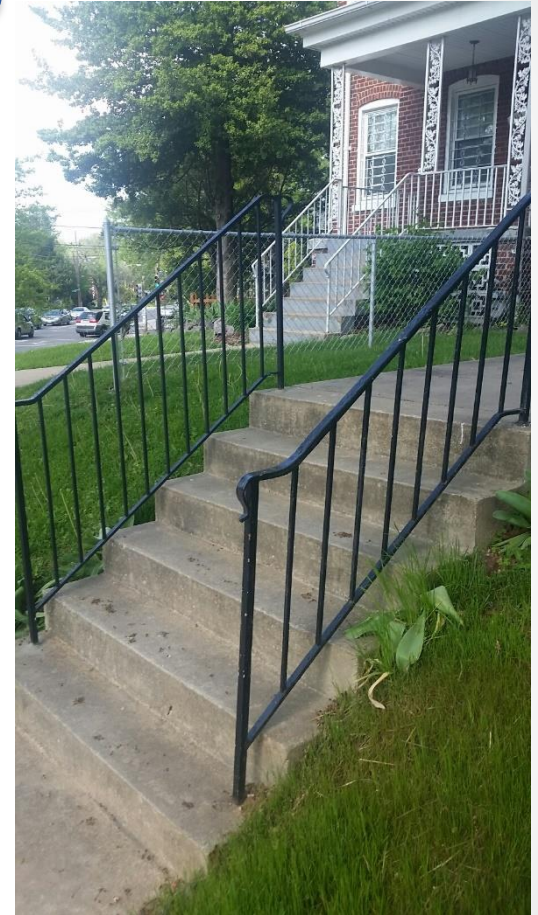


After

Entrances



Before



After

Entrances

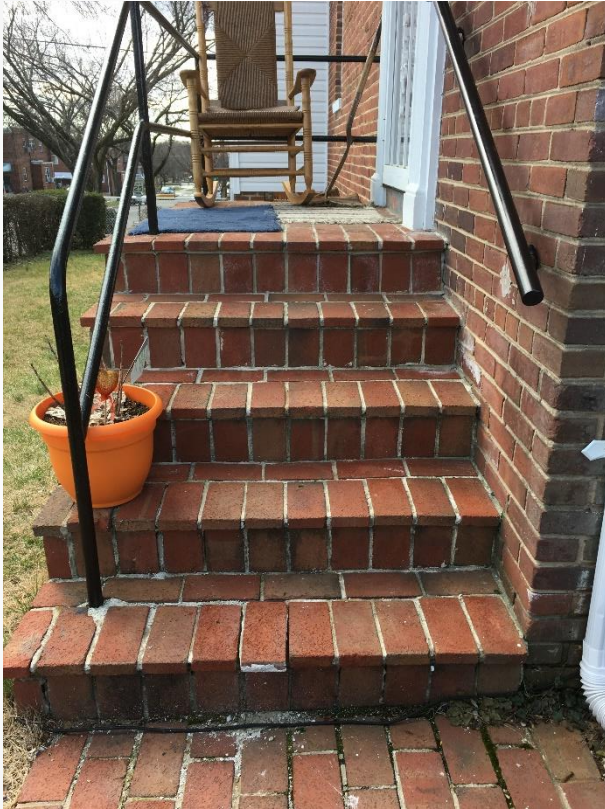


Before

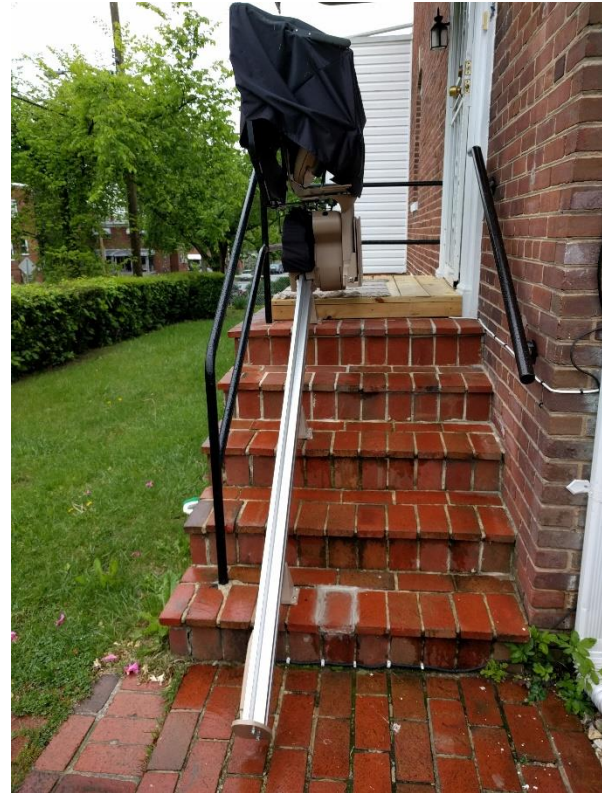


After

Entrances



Before



After

Entrances

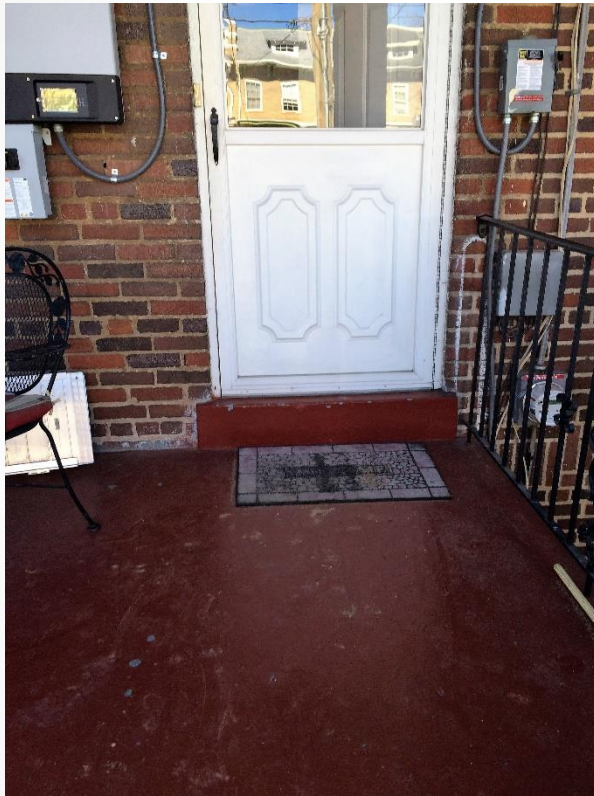


Before



After

Entrances



Before



After

Entrances



Before



After

Entrances

- Lifts



Entrances

- Lifts



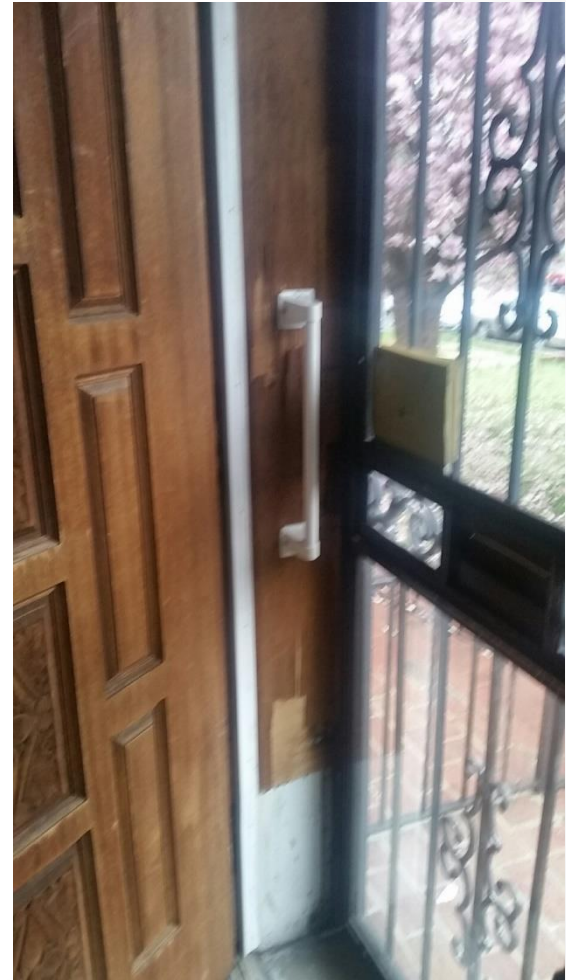
Entrances

- Ramps
 - Every inch requires one foot of ramp



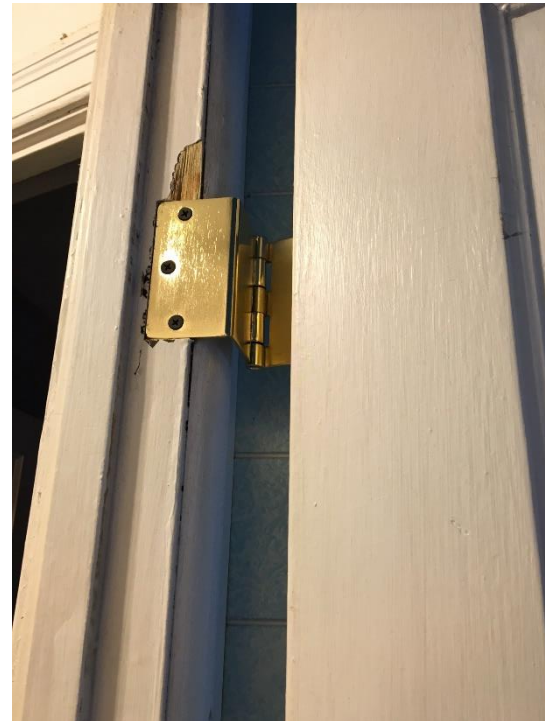
Entrances

- Grab bar at door



Doors

- Swing clear hinges



Doors

- Lever handles



Living Rooms

- Height
- Light



Living Rooms



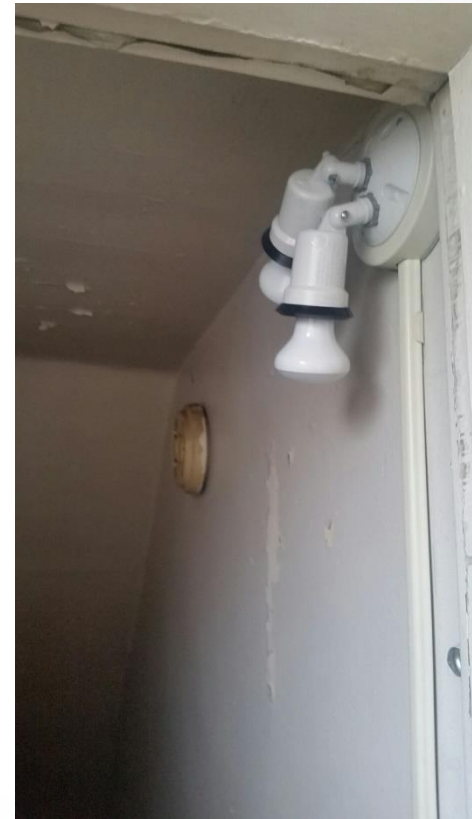
Before



After

Stairs

- Light
- Contrast



Stairs

- Dual handrails



Stairs

- Stairlifts



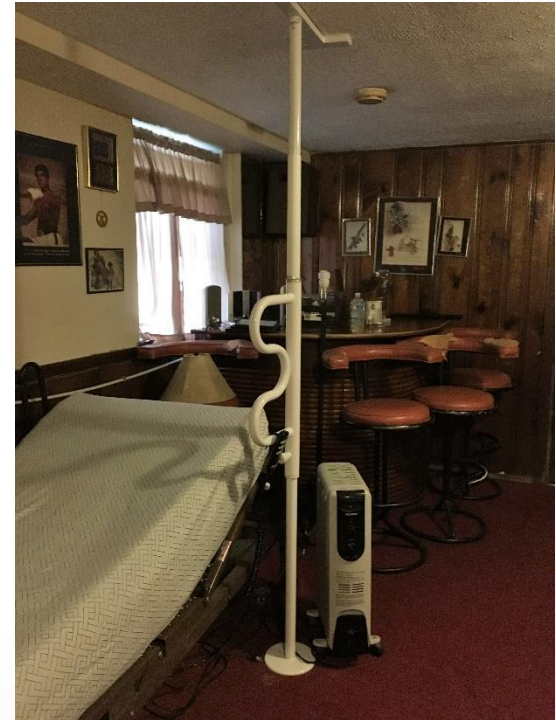
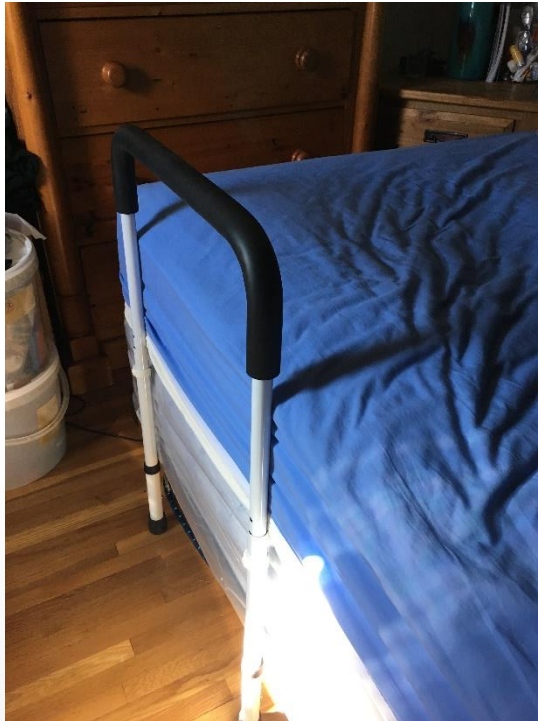
Stairs

- Stairlifts



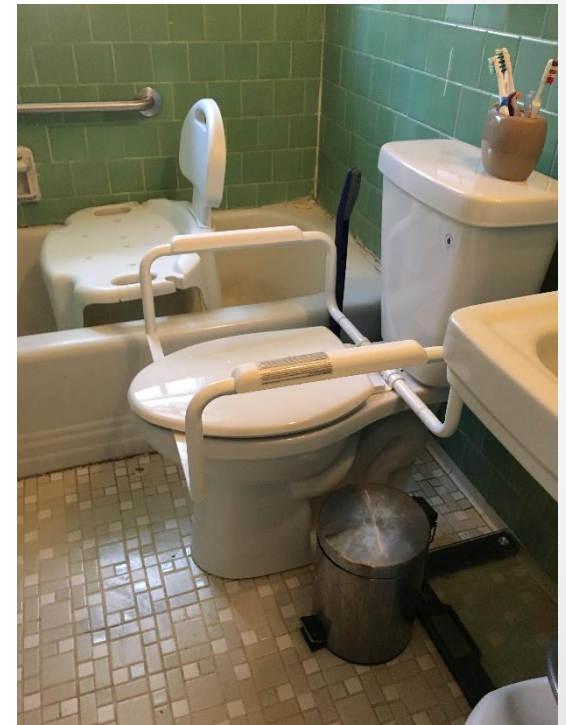
Bedroom

- Height
- Support



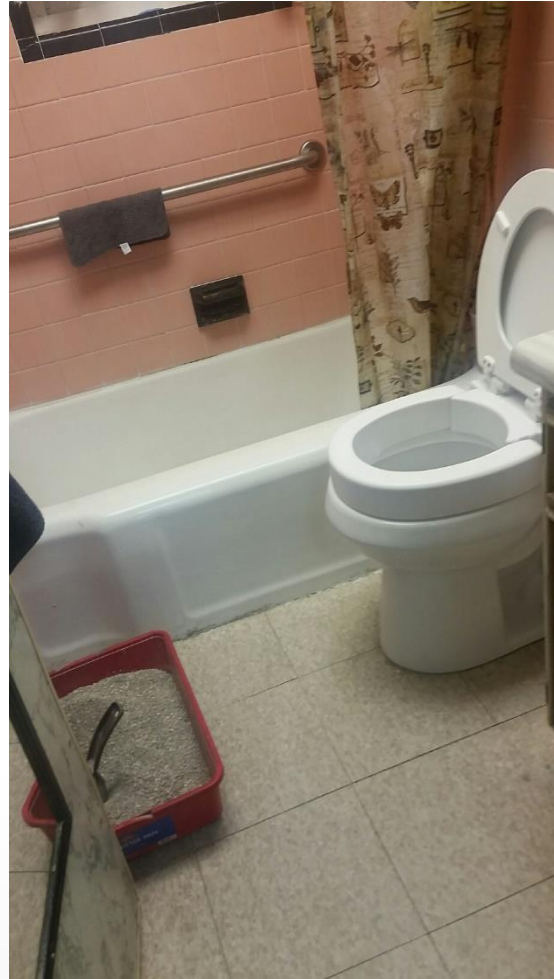
Bathroom

Support for toilet



Bathroom

- Height



Bathroom



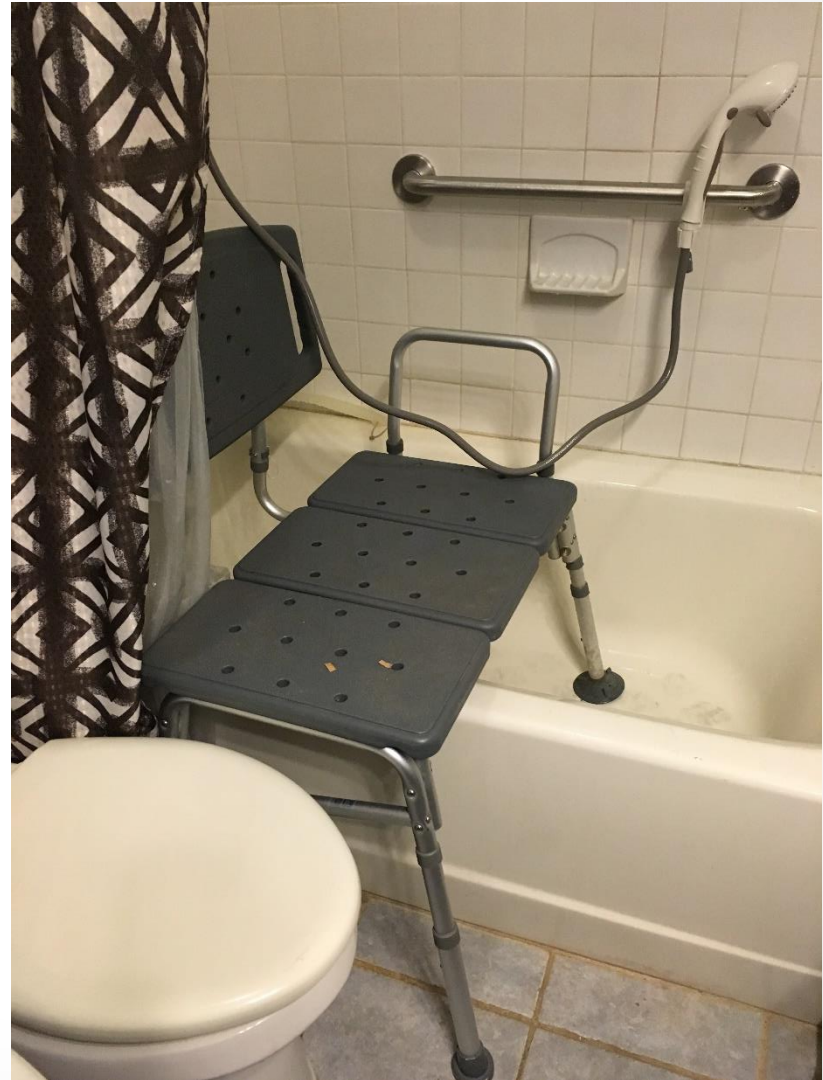
Before



After

Bathroom

- Transfer Benches



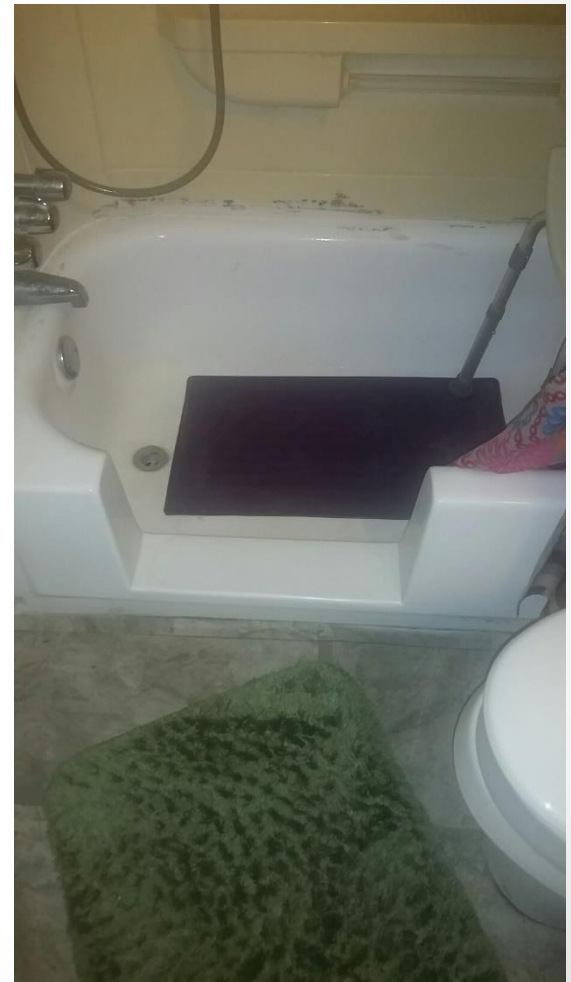
Bathroom

- Tub Lift



Bathroom

- Tub Cuts



Bathroom

Before



After



Questions?

Stacy Lipman OTD, OTR/L, CAPS

Occupational Therapist with Safe at Home
safeathome@homecarepartners.org

