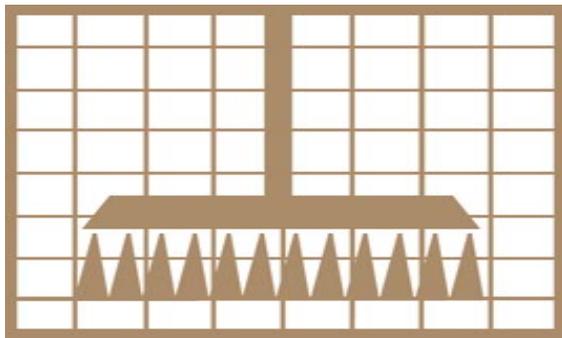

Around the House

*Independent living tips
to assist with
housecleaning and storage*



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Choosing the right tool for the job and adapting the tools you have can make working in and taking care of your home a lot easier. This brochure discusses some adaptations and devices that may be of assistance to you.

As a consumer, you have the right to try things out in the store. Ask for a demonstration, and thoroughly try out the item yourself.

Cleaning

Floors - When purchasing a vacuum cleaner, think carefully about your upper body strength. Don't buy a model that will be too heavy for you to maneuver. As a rule, canister type vacuum cleaners are lighter than uprights. They also have attachments for cleaning upholstery, drapes, blinds and corners, which makes them more versatile. On the other hand, upright vacuums can help you with balance and support. A rotating brush on the upright's power head, though more

expensive, will be able to penetrate further down into carpet and pick up ground-in dirt. Another drawback of the upright vacuum is that the head may move independently and thus may get away from you.

Electric brooms may be as useful as full-size vacuum cleaners. They are lighter, less expensive, can be adapted for carpets or bare floors, and do not require vacuum cleaner bags. Try emptying the broom's dust compartment when trying it out at the store to make sure that it is not more difficult than replacing a bag on a vacuum cleaner.

When buying a non-electric broom, look for one with a slanted edge and feathered bristles. Wide push-brooms can provide support while sweeping.

Long-handled dustpans can be bought at many stores. You can also insert a broom handle into the dustpan's hollow handle so that you can angle it to lie flat on the floor. You can also purchase

attachable extra handles to give you better leverage and keep you from having to bend over when using long-handled tools.

Dust mops handily clean under beds and furniture and down steps. They also offer some help with balance and support.

If you use a wheelchair, the handles of mops or brooms may be too long for you to use. You can cut them off, then attach a bicycle-grip or D-grip handle to give yourself a better grip.

Dusting- Dust frequently. Dust combines with airborne grease from cooking to form a sticky film that requires scrubbing to remove. A reaching aid holding a soft cloth can reach awkward surfaces. A dusting mitt can be modified to fit over a foot, allowing you to dust along mop boards and under cabinet edges without bending over.

Make or buy an apron with plenty of large pockets to carry cleaning supplies, or attach a pocketed

pouch to your walker or wheelchair. A small cart on casters can also be used to move cleaning supplies from place to place; sturdier models will offer some support when walking.

Windows - A lightweight, car-sized squeegee can be mounted on a broom handle. Use the sponge side with a warm water/vinegar solution to scrub windows and mirrors; then wipe clean and dry with the rubber blade.

Storage

Organization is the key to efficient, accessible storage. Most of the products referred to in this section are widely available at hardware and department stores. Be sure to take along accurate measurements and comparison shop to find the product that solves a storage problem the most effectively for the least money.

Items stored in an area that is the height of your waist to just above your eye level will be most accessible. Placing an item "within reach" means putting it in an area that is six inches less than your arm's length, seated or standing; or within reach of your reaching aid.

Store heavy objects within easy reach so you can handle them safely. When possible, store items close to where they will be used.

Some storage can be made movable for easier use, such as roll-out shelves, hanging organizers on cupboard or closet doors, or storage carts on casters.

Kitchens - Make the most of already accessible space, as most kitchens have a lot of awkward or unuseable space. Stacking shelves or bins come in plastic or metal in many sizes and designs. Roll-out shelves can make the back of a shelf as accessible as the front.

Under-shelf containers utilize wasted space; a lazy susan gives ready access to the back of a shelf. A blank wall becomes storage with a sheet of peg board and wire hooks. Pull-out shelving allows access from both sides of an island counter. Corner cupboards can be better used by installing revolving or swinging shelves.

Bathrooms - Vertical towel bars have rings through which you can hang towels. They take up little space and are easily reached. Hanging racks, available in many bed and bath shops, can be very useful in the tub and shower. They can be attached to a wall, the side of the tub, or the shower fixture, and can hold shampoo, soap, brushes, etc. If you take baths instead of showers, a shelf across the tub can hold bathing items.

Closets - Stacking bins can create accessible storage at waist height on the floor of a closet; shelving units attached to the door can store cleaning,

laundry, or kitchen supplies within easy reach. Full closet organizer systems are available for \$50 and up; look for a sturdy modular unit that allows you to set shelves at heights that you can reach easily. Lower the clothes bar if you use a wheelchair. Bi-fold doors will give you easier access to the entire closet.

For More Information, Contact:

Virginia Assistive Technology System: **Toll-Free 1-800-552-5019**

For aging-related information and services, contact:

Virginia Department for the Aging:
Toll-Free 1-800-552-3402
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