**Designing your Home for the Elderly!**

**A dew tips from the experts:**

**Easy on the Hands.** You probably don't think much about turning a doorknob, but it can actually be quite a chore, even painful, for someone with arthritis or other conditions. Simply replacing doorknobs with lever-style hardware can make life easier for residents. Levers are also best on faucets, and illuminated rocker switches are better than the standard toggle light switches.

**Friendly Floors.** Slippery surfaces are not the only danger underfoot, although they're the most obvious. All floors should be made slip-resistant, such as by adding nonskid mats under area rugs (or getting rid of the area rugs completely). Trips are as dangerous as slips, so eliminate trip points like thresholds wherever possible, or reduce their height. For those who use walkers, adds Cratsley, low-pile carpeting is safest so the walker doesn't catch on deep pile and cause a fall.

**Safe Stairs.**For older people living on more than one level, stairs can be especially dangerous. Handrails are a must, on both sides of the staircase if possible. Lighting is also critical, says Cratsley, so make sure the entire stairway is well lit from top to bottom. Clearly defined steps that show where the edge of the tread is can help prevent falls.

**A Well-Lighted Place.** The staircase isn't the only part of a home that needs good lighting. A dark room is an invitation to a bump or a fall, so make sure there's adequate lighting in every room, hallway, and doorway. Entryways are especially dangerous if not well lit.

**Landing Places.** Fumbling with keys, packages, the mail — all can distract and unbalance someone entering or exiting a home. In addition to providing lighting at entryways be sure to have a table, bench, or other surface nearby for putting things down.

**Better Baths.** Most people think of shower grab bars as the way to make bathing safer. There are other ways to help ensure safety in the bath, says Cratsley. Think about adding grab bars by the toilet, too, or other places in the room where someone may need a helping hand. A step-in shower is safer than a tub, but if that's not possible add grab bars that help someone getting in and out. A single-handled faucet control reduces the chances of scalding at the sink, and a pressure-balanced control does the same in the shower. A hand-held showerhead is often easier to use for someone with limited mobility than a fixed showerhead