

# ALS Home Accessibility

As ALS progresses, maneuvering around your home can become challenging—and the thought of making big renovations or moving can be overwhelming. There are a variety of options, including relatively inexpensive home modifications and adaptive equipment, that may continue to make your home accessible.

The physical and occupational therapists at your ALS clinic or home health agency can help you try to find ways to continue to access your home and maintain your independence.



## Assessing Your Options

Every home presents its own challenges and opportunities for short-term and long-term accessibility. In order to understand your options, it is important to have an experienced professional come into your home so they can see it in person and make recommendations. Once you have received the information from your home assessment, you can begin to think about your short- and long-term options. Planning for your future needs can help you make timely adjustments and avoid getting stuck in a situation where you have limited accessibility.

## Home Modifications without Renovations

After your home evaluation is complete, you should have a good understanding of the changes that need to be made so you can be safe and more independent at home. Clearing pathways and removing tripping hazards is often a good place to start. This may include removing loose throw rugs, cleaning up clutter, and rearranging furniture.

Narrow doorways can present a problem for some mobility devices. If your doorways are just a little too narrow, you can gain extra space by installing offset hinges, removing the trim, or even removing some interior doors altogether. Flooring is another important factor to take into consideration. Smooth, high-impact surfaces that are not too slippery are usually a good option.

## Ramps and Lifts

Whether you are walking or driving a power wheelchair, there are a wide variety of ramps that can help you continue to access the different parts of your home and property. These include threshold ramps (fixed, adjustable, or modular) and custom ramps.

If you do not have enough room for a ramp to help you get up and down a few steps, you may want to consider getting a vertical platform lift. These motorized lifts can support the weight of a power wheelchair and are typically located either outside the home or in a garage.

If you live in a home with one or more sets of stairs, accessing the different levels of your home can become challenging. Depending on the configuration of your stairs, you may be able to install a motorized stair lift (also called a stair glide) to transport you between floors.

Ramps, platform lifts, and stair lifts are not usually covered by insurance. Ask your local ALS Network care manager if they might be able to lend you one from their equipment loan closet or suggest where you can get one.

## Bathroom Accessibility

Bathrooms tend to have tighter spaces and narrower doorways. If you use a walker and can still walk some on your own, you may be able to leave your walker outside of the bathroom and use strategically placed grab bars to safely maneuver around. Be sure to remove rugs, bathmats, and other tripping hazards.

Smaller showers with lips can be challenging and may be inaccessible if you aren't able to step up and over. Grab bars can be added to assist with safety and balance. If you have a bathtub, you may be able to use a tub transfer bench or tub slider to help you transfer into and out of the tub. Wide roll-in showers offer the most accessibility and flexibility for shower chairs and patient (Hoyer) lifts. A barrier free roll-in shower is the safest option.

## Should I remodel or move?

If you are unable to make your home more accessible by using adaptive equipment and making smaller changes, or moving everything to live on one accessible floor, you may need to consider remodeling or moving. To make the best decision for you, you may need to reflect on your home's accessibility, quality-of-life priorities, financial resources, care support, and other factors. Before making any big decisions, try to get input from ALS professionals and possibly other families affected by ALS who might be able to offer insights into what has and hasn't worked for them.

### Get Local Support



*Formerly ALS Golden West*

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