

# Universal Design in the Kitchen

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Where you eat should be accessible, comfortable and usable for everyone in the family. As the hub of most homes, the kitchen draws people together. Incorporating some simple design considerations into your remodel can make the kitchen a functional space today and accessible into the future.

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## Cabinets & Countertops

- Build countertops at varying heights for different tasks. Lower levels allow the ability to sit while preparing and cooking meals. The best height is 28" - 32". The usable counter space for a seated person is about 16".
- Create pullout work surfaces such as counters, breadboards and cutting boards for access from a chair. Drawers with fully extendable glides are easier to get into.
- Build or install the wall cabinets closer to the countertop.
- Make bigger, deeper toe kicks and knee spaces under counters.
- Install lazy Susan's and pulout shelves.
- Install D-shaped loop handles on cabinet doors and drawers.
- Reduce glare by using low gloss finishes.
- Use contrasting colors to enhance visibility for those with reduced vision.

## Plumbing

- Install a sink with a shallow (5" - 6" deep) basin for easy reach. By using a tub-bend pipe, the drain can be moved closer to the rear of the undercounter area to provide knee room.
- Install the sink closer to the front of the counter. A removable "faux" counter face under the sink allows the area to be quickly converted to accommodate the user.
- Use a lever or loop handled kitchen faucet. Choose faucets with pull out or push-button sprayer controls.
- Prevent scalding by installing faucets with temperature controls. Insulate hot water pipes under the sink

## Appliances

- Shop for a side-by-side refrigerator and cooktop with front-mounted controls.
- Place microwave drawer or wall oven 31" from the floor for easier access.
- Install dishwasher drawer 6" to 8" above floor level and make it accessible from the right or left sides.
- Place outlets no lower than 15" off the floor.
- Switches and thermostats should be 48" above the floor.

## Also keep in mind that all rooms need:

- Five feet square of open area to allow a wheelchair user to make 360 degree turnaround.
- Low-pile carpeting or non-slip flooring.
- Ideally, doors openings should be 36" wide.
- Swing away hinges on doors to allow full use of the entire door frame width.