



# WHAT IS VISITABILITY?

The visitability of your home plays a major role in deciding if family and friends are able to visit you. Is your grandmother who uses a wheelchair able to get inside your home? Is your child's best friend who uses an assistive walking device able to easily access and maneuver through your home? Visitability is defined as a measure of ease of access for people with disabilities. Plainly put, if your home is visitable, all people, regardless of age or disability are able to comfortably visit your home and easily maneuver while there. While visitability was originally designed for people with disabilities, anyone can benefit from its design aspects. Delivery workers, movers, service workers, grocery shoppers, and others will benefit from visitability design by eliminating design aspects that are not inclusive of everyone.

## Why is visitability important?

About one in four, or 26% of adults in the United States live with a disability and more than half of these adults have a mobility disability or other physical disability. This means that you are likely to know someone who would benefit from visitability design aspects. In addition to people with disabilities having higher rates of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and cancer when compared to people without disabilities, studies also show that people with disabilities experience loneliness and social isolation at significantly higher rates. Being socially isolated affects a person's physical, mental, and cognitive health. Living in homes that are not designed for people with mobility disabilities or having friends and family members whose homes are designed the same way, limits the places a person with a mobility disability can visit. Homes without these visitability features contribute to social isolation, as it is more difficult to visit friends at home.

Visitability is also important as it directly relates to individuals being able to age in place or remain in their home as they age. Many older adults and adults with disabilities want to live in their homes for the rest of their lives, but are unable to because of inaccessible designs that may make it impossible. Homes designed with visitability features in mind allow people to age in place and ultimately live more independently. Eliminating the need for people to move into other facilities or homes as they age, gives people a sense of pride, comfortability, and familiarity with a place they have called home for so long. Visitability also contributes to inclusive communities by not excluding who may visit your home and by making it a more welcoming environment for people with and without disabilities.

## What makes a home visitable?

As previously mentioned, visitability is a design approach that makes homes accessible for all people. But what if you're not building a home and cannot incorporate designs into a new build? The following are features to consider when remodeling or upgrading your home to include visitability features:

- Ramp or no-step entrance
- First floor bathroom with ample space to maneuver
- Front door entrance at least 36 inches wide
- Interior doorways at least 32 inches wide
- Reinforced bathroom walls able to support grab bars
- Levered door handles
- Single-lever kitchen and bathroom faucets
- Electrical outlets 18 inches from the floor
- Lowered climate control switches
- Lowered light switches

As you can see from the list above, some of these design aspects are major upgrades and are expensive, while others are less expensive improvements. Whatever your budget, try to incorporate all or some of these design features into your home to make it one that will grow with you as you age.

## Connect with a health information specialist to learn more!

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