

HOME ECONOMICS GUIDE



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Features of the "Age Proof" House

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Older People definitely want to stay in their own homes as long as they possibly can. They enjoy the independence and individuality which they feel in continuing to live in familiar surroundings.

So, if you're planning a home to suit your retirement years or for your parents, then we'd like to give you a look at what older home-makers have told us are needs of those aged 65 and beyond.

There are some things especially important for people their age. Uppermost in their minds are *convenience, comfort and safety*—good ideas for people of any age. The room of most concern is the kitchen where they, like other home-makers, spend a good share of their time.

What are their concerns based on? Probably the actual experience of what happens as you grow older. The senses grow duller more than the individual realizes. Eyesight, hearing, smelling, even the sense of touch isn't what it used to be.

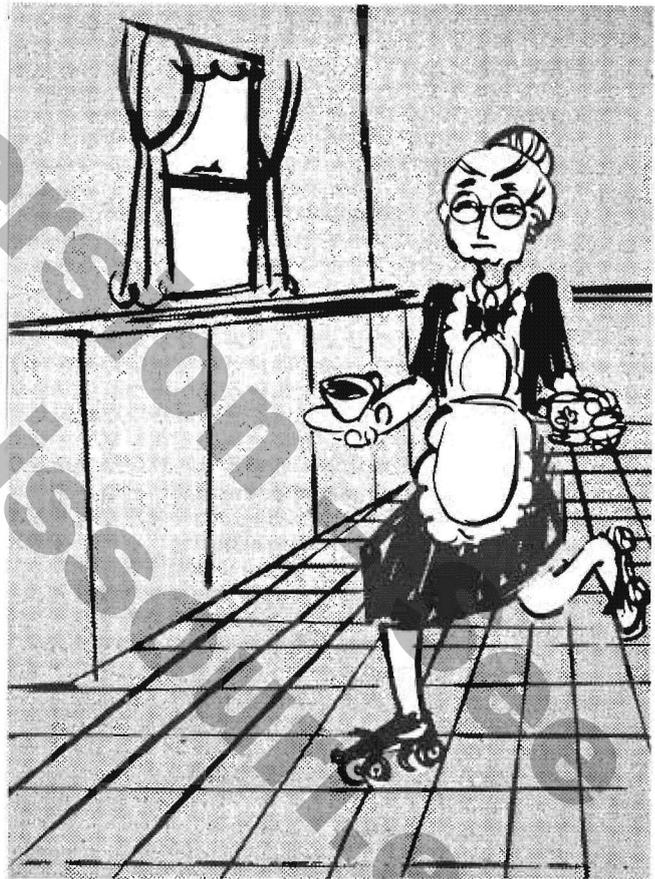
You're not as agile—you slow down—you don't have the zip you once had. Even your sense of balance becomes affected.

In a recent survey, Iowa State University asked 85 homemakers, aged 65 and over, what their preferences were, relating to housing and equipment. Their answers confirmed thoughts we already had and added some new ideas, too.

Convenience and Comfort

Convenience and comfort pretty much go hand in hand. If your house is built for convenience, then it's certain to be more comfortable to live in. In the survey, the older homemakers indicated they wanted the following:

- *A kitchen of minimum size.* They didn't want a big kitchen where there would be a lot of walking between the range and the sink and refrigerator to get a meal.
- *Adequate counter space.* They asked for plenty of "elbow room"—no crowded work area in their kitchens. It's easy for counter space to get cluttered with a little bit of everything, leaving no room for mixing and stirring.



- *Adequate storage that's within "easy reach."* Some didn't want wall cabinets—the bottom shelves were easier for them to use. It seems easier for them to stoop than to stretch. As age increases, it's more difficult to maintain equilibrium. When reaching for objects, the body's center of gravity shifts, requiring the person to maintain balance in a new position. This is hard for an older person who does not move quickly, and it often results in falls.

re-connecting a circuit breaker than they ate in replacing a fuse if standing on a damp floor.

● *Low-pitched and long-ringing doorbells and telephones.* Loss of hearing generally starts with the higher tones. So lower tones can be heard better. And longer rings give the older person a chance to get to the telephone or door without a feeling of having to hurry.

Plan for convenience, comfort and safety. This is what older homemakers say you'll want, too, especially when you reach their age. So prepare for it now. It's the home environment that gives maximum livability for later years.

Just as people prepare for financial security and best possible physical health, so should they prepare for housing needs appropriate for retirement years. And, do it during working years while you can better afford it.



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