

Aging in Place: Tips to make staying in your home possible



It has been estimated that over the next 20 years, Canada's senior population, comprised of those aged 65 and older, is expected to grow by 68%. While "aging in place" (staying in one's home while getting older) has long been touted as a worthy consideration that provides numerous benefits, the increasing volume of seniors combined with the post pandemic fear of shared accommodations will likely result in an increased number of seniors choosing this path.

Aging in place, when done with advanced planning and the assistance of professional guidance, provides numerous benefits including honoring dignity and independence, maintaining a higher quality of life, providing personalized/individualized care, reducing the risk of illnesses and injuries and improving recovery rates from same, all while minimizing some of the stressors of change.

Physiotherapists can assist with the pre planning stage to ensure that seniors can more safely and successfully age in place. A physiotherapist will perform a thorough assessment of the individual's physical capacity (strength, mobility, balance, gait, etc) and make recommendations to improve or maintain these abilities. These recommendations may include a specific strength, balance and mobility exercise routine or something as simple as a regular walking routine with or without the use of a walking aide (cane, walker, walking poles). A physiotherapist may also recommend an **Occupational Therapy** assessment be performed to determine what adjustments should be made to the living quarters to maximize the client's safety and level of function to facilitate a successful aging in place.

If you or a senior you know are considering aging in place it is worthwhile to consider the recommendations listed below to ensure your current home is suitably modified or a new home is appropriately equipped and organized for an aging senior:

- ▷ Limiting/eliminating stairs – Stairs are often the biggest barrier to someone staying in their home. Ideally, people wanting to age in place can live on one level with a zero-

threshold entrance. Many homes will have 3-4 steps to the main level, which may not seem like much to someone who is healthy and mobile but can challenge anyone with physical limitations. A railing will make stairs much easier, and 2 railings is even better. Long-term plans for a ramp/lift to accommodate using a wheelchair or walker are also something to consider. For people living in a 2-storey house and hoping to stay, stair lift options or making room for a bedroom and bathroom on the main floor are considerations.

- ▷ Space – Reducing clutter and furniture can go a long way to eliminating falls and allowing room to use gait aids like walkers or wheelchairs. Hallways and doorways are ideally 34-36" wide. Thick carpeting, area rugs or high gloss flooring increase the risk of falls, non-slip flooring options should be explored as well as minimizing thresholds.
- ▷ Bathrooms – Falling in bathrooms is unfortunately too common. This is often because bathrooms tend to be smaller spaces that don't allow people to use their walkers. Ensuring that a bathroom is large enough to maneuver a walker or wheelchair reduces the risk of falls. Walk-in showers are more accessible than tubs, zero-threshold shower stalls are ideal. Adding grab bars and non-slip surfaces in the bathroom can also reduce the risk of falling.

Remember, staying physically active and maintaining your mobility is one of the best ways to improve your quality of life in the later years and is a key ingredient to successfully aging in place. Being strong and steady can reduce your risk of falling, alleviate some health conditions and boost your overall physical capacity and confidence. **Let your local physiotherapist help you plan your path to a stronger, safer and more independent way of life as you age!**

Be sure to visit www.mbphysio.org to find a physio near you.

YOUR PHYSIOTHERAPIST HAS THE ABILITY TO USE A BROAD RANGE OF TREATMENT TECHNIQUES TO HELP YOU GET BETTER.



Manitoba
Physiotherapy
Association

Association
manitobaine de
physiothérapie

To find a physiotherapist
in your area, visit

www.mbphysio.org

Sponsored by **Manitoba Physiotherapy Association**