

Modifying your Home: Doors and walls

December 2015

Is it difficult for you to move around inside your home because of your disability? Maybe there are some modifications that could be made to your home to make it easier for you to move around. The Ministry of Health might be able to help fund these modifications.

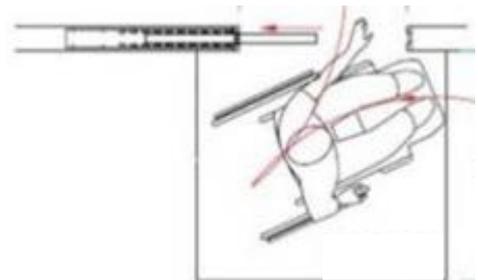
The type of modifications the Ministry of Health can help fund for your home will depend on your disability related needs and situation.

Will modifying the inside of your home help?

For your home to work the best it can for you, think about how you get around and your disability related needs and situation.

The main things to think about

- Do you use a wheelchair? If so, you may need more turning space to move around inside your home.
- How wide are your doorways? If you push yourself in a manual wheelchair, you need enough space for your wheelchair and your arms to get through without hitting the doorway. (In most cases, a narrow door would be 760 millimetres with a 710 millimetre opening width; wider doors are easier to use.)
- How wide are your halls? If you have a narrow hall, you might need a wider doorway for a wheelchair to be able to move through to another room.
- What type of doors do you have? Hinged doors are harder to use than sliding doors for people in wheelchairs.
- How hard is it to open and close the doors and what style and height are the door handles? Lever door handles may be easier to use than round door knobs.
- Do you need to get into every room in your home or just the important ones, like the bathroom, bedroom, kitchen and living areas?



Other things to think about

- Could your needs and circumstances change over the next two to three years?
- Would you find it easier to move around if you make some changes to your wheelchair, for example, using a single footplate?
- If you use a power wheelchair, would a different model turn better in smaller spaces?
- Would you get more space if you moved the hinges on a door so that it swings open in the other direction or if you replaced a swing door with a simple sliding or cavity sliding door?

(Cavity sliding doors open by sliding away into the space, or cavity, between two walls. This leaves more room along the outside of the walls. Cavity sliding doors take up less space than either swing or ordinary sliding doors, but they are more expensive to build. Also, you need to check that there are no pipes or electrical fittings in the wall cavity where you want the door to slide.)

- Could you get more useful space by removing a wall, such as a wall between a bathroom and a separate toilet?

Building details

- A home's walls are either partition or structural (also known as load-bearing) walls. It is much easier to move or change partition walls.
- Moving structural walls needs careful planning and is usually quite expensive. Extra beams might need to be installed in the ceiling.
- You may need to get a building consent to change or move doors and walls, especially if they are external. Building consents need to include designs and plans for the modifications. You will need to wait for the building consent to be approved before your builder can start on your modifications. (Find out more about the building consent process in our factsheet *Modifying Your Home: Building Consent*.)

Sometimes modifying your home may not be the best or only option for you. Maybe you should consider moving to another home that better suits your needs.

Getting modifications made inside your home

Contact a Ministry of Health Equipment and Modification Service (EMS) qualified housing assessor to help you work out what modifications you need for the doors or walls inside your home. The EMS housing assessor can help you work out the most cost-effective option for your needs and if you can get funding help from the Ministry of Health.

EMS qualified housing assessors are occupational therapists. You can contact them through your:

- local district health board
- Needs Assessment Service Coordination (NASC) organisation
- GP
- www.otnz.co.nz/public/find-an-occupational-therapist/
- Enable Information on phone: 0800 17 1981.

You may also choose to organise and pay for modifications to your home yourself.

Ministry of Health funding

- If you have already paid for any modifications to your home before you apply for Ministry of Health funding, generally you cannot claim back the cost for those modifications from the Ministry of Health.
- The Ministry of Health has a limited amount of funding available for housing modifications to support disabled people. They use a **prioritisation tool** to make sure this funding is used as fairly as possible. The prioritisation tool compares your current needs and how much you will benefit from the home modifications with other disabled people's needs.
- Generally you can only get Ministry of Health funding once for a particular type of modification.
- If the total cost of the modifications to your home is more than \$8,076 (including GST), you will have to have an **income and cash asset test** to work out whether you need to pay any of the cost yourself. The total cost includes the cost of any other modifications that the Ministry of Health has already funded for you since you turned 16 years of age.

Modifications to your home for children aged 15 years or younger do not need income and cash asset tests. (Find out more about the income and cash asset tests process in our factsheet *Modifying Your Home: Income and Cash Asset Tests*.)

- You can only get funding for modifications that help you get in and out of and around the main rooms that you use, for example, the living room, kitchen, bathroom and your bedroom.

For more information about modifying your home

If you live:

- **in Auckland or Northland:**
contact **Accessible**
Freephone 0508 001 002
Email **info@accessible.co.nz**
- **anywhere else in New Zealand:**
contact **Enable New Zealand**
Freephone 0800 17 1981
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