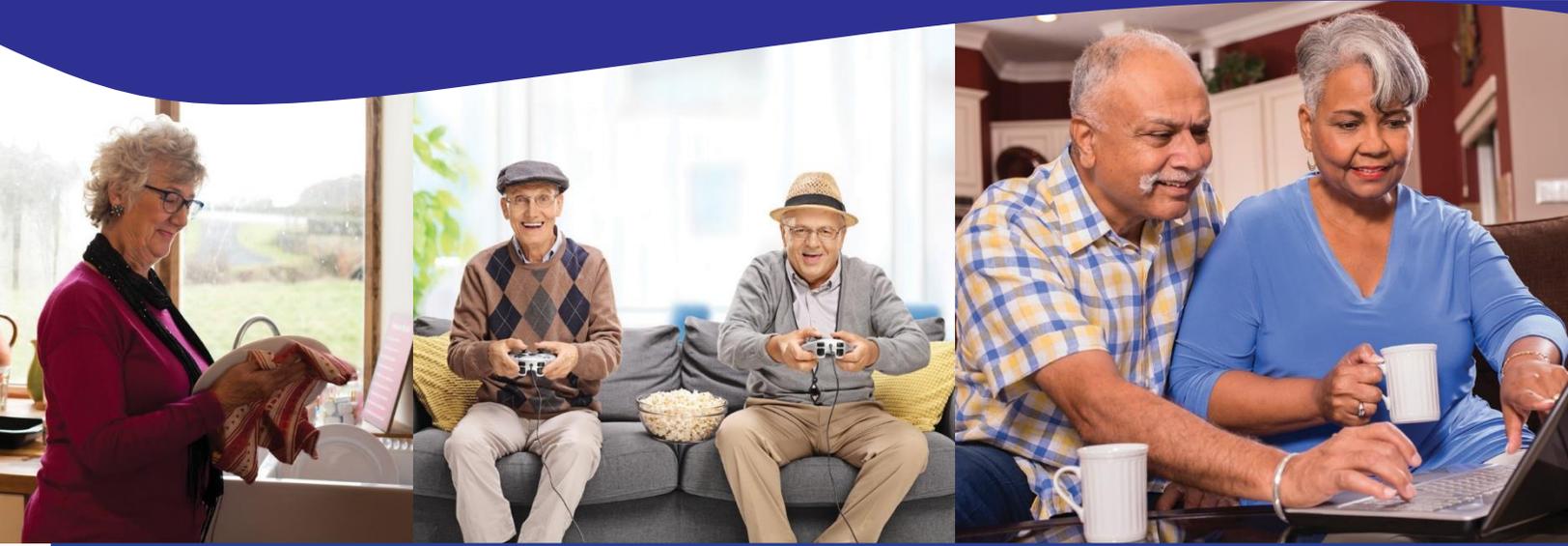


# Adaptations in Rental Buildings

## Information for Property Managers



As our population ages, many residents living in apartments may require additional support for their health and safety. Hamilton's Plan for an Age Friendly City recommends that property managers install adaptations (grab bars, modified door handles, etc.), upon request from a resident (Recommendation 1.4.8).

Furthermore, the Age Friendly Plan encourages property managers to create common spaces and opportunities for information sharing (e.g. apartment bulletin boards, newsletters) to foster a sense of community and enhance opportunities for mutual support (Recommendation 1.4.6.).

Note: Under the Ontario Human Rights Code, a Property Manager may be required to take special steps to make a unit or building more accessible. This is called the "duty to accommodate." The property manager should make the requested changes unless it is an "undue hardship", meaning that it is too expensive. For example installing a grab bar is generally considered a reasonable request.

## Important Adaptations that will aid in the health and safety of your residents

### Bathrooms:

Install a minimum of two grab bars at each bathtub or shower combination (as shown in the photo below and as per code instructions provided).

Note: For more individual adaptations, the property manager could ask the resident to consult with an Occupational Therapist and provide a report. For those residents who often shower in the tub combination, they may request an additional, higher horizontal grab bar.



Wherever feasible, installation of grab bars for toilet use are also recommended.

**Warning: Do not install clamping or suction cup grab bars as they pose a safety hazard.**

The installation of higher toilets is recommended.

A showerhead on an adjustable pole is recommended.

## Building Code Grab Bars Requirements for Bathtubs, Bathtub-Shower Combinations, and Showers

**Vertical Grab Bar.** A vertical grab bar shall be provided on the control end wall or the end wall opposite the control end wall of the bathtub or bathtub-shower combination. For showers, a vertical grab bar that is usable by a person stepping into and out of the shower enclosure shall be provided.

**Bathtub End Wall Vertical Grab Bars.** End wall vertical grab bars for bathtubs shall comply with all of the following:

1. Vertical grab bars shall have a length of not less than 36 in. (914 mm).
2. Vertical grab bars shall be located between 24 in. (610 mm) and 27 in. (686 mm) above the finished floor, measured to the lower end.
3. Vertical grab bars shall be installed at the end that is least obstructed for entry and egress.
4. Vertical grab bars shall be located between 9 in. (228 mm) and 12 in. (305 mm) from the open entry and exit side of the bathtub, bathtub-shower combination, measured horizontally from the exterior plane of the bathtub, bathtub-shower combination.

**Shower Grab Bars.** Vertical grab bars for showers shall comply with all of the following:

1. Vertical grab bars shall have a length of not less than 24 in. (610 mm).
2. Vertical grab bars shall be located between 36 in. (914 mm) and 39 in. (991 mm) above the finished floor, measured to the lower end.

**Back Wall Grab Bars.** For bathtubs and bathtub-shower combinations bounded on two or three sides by walls, a diagonal grab bar or horizontal grab bar shall be provided on the back wall.

**Back Wall Diagonal Grab Bars.** Diagonal grab bars shall comply with all of the following:

1. Diagonal grab bars shall have a length of no less than 24 in. (600 mm).
2. Diagonal grab bars shall be located so the higher end is closest to the control end wall.
3. Higher ends of diagonal grab bars shall be located a maximum of 12 in. (305 mm) from the control end wall.
4. Higher ends of diagonal grab bars shall be located 25 in. (635 mm) minimum and 27 in. (685 mm) maximum above the rim of the bathtub.
5. Lower ends of diagonal grab bars

**Back Wall Horizontal Grab Bars.** Horizontal grab bars shall comply with all of the following:

1. Horizontal grab bars shall be located 8 in. (205 mm) minimum and 10 in. (255 mm) maximum above the bathtub rim.
2. Horizontal grab bars shall be located so one end is 12 in. (305 mm) maximum from the control end wall and the other end is located 24 in. (610 mm) maximum from the opposite, or head, end of the bathtub.

**Grab Bar Details.** Grab bars shall be circular in cross section with a minimum diameter of 1 1/4 in. (32 mm) and a maximum diameter of 2 in. (51 mm).

Where attached to a wall, grab bars shall provide a clearance for hand grasp of 1 1/2 in. (38 mm) minimum.

Grab bars shall be designed and constructed to the structural loading conditions in accordance with the building code.

Follow grab bar manufacturers instructions for installation.

\* adapted from NPFA Building Code and Life Safety Code

## Levers and Handles

- a. Faucets: lever handles are recommended
- b. Cupboards and Drawers: "D" shaped pulls are recommended
- c. Doors: lever handles are recommended



## Kitchen

- a. Ensure the microwave is placed solidly on a counter
- b. A stove with front controls is recommended if reaching is a problem



## Other Safety Items that should be considered for Residents in the Building

- a. Stairs: railings on both sides of stairways, entry ways or any other areas that have steps (even a single step) are recommended. The best railings are the kind that can be grasped by wrapping your hand around the railing.
- b. Lighting: Common areas need to be well lit.
- c. Doors: Automatic door openers are recommended



## Fostering A Sense of Community

Putting up a bulletin board so that tenants may announce activities and allowing tenants to program activities in common space fosters a sense of community and enhances opportunities for mutual support amongst the tenants.

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Tips for Property Managers on how to offer social opportunities for older tenants is available at [www.agefriendlyhamilton.ca](http://www.agefriendlyhamilton.ca)

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**McMaster University**

**Age Friendly**



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City of Hamilton  
Seniors Advisory  
Committee

**HCoA**  
Hamilton Council  
on Aging

**St. Joseph's**  
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[www.crbprogram.org](http://www.crbprogram.org)

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