

New accessories for simpler, safer baths

To design or adapt a bathroom to suit common lifestyle or physical changes, more of us are embracing Universal Design solutions. One lifestyle change calling for safer bathroom accessories involves bathing toddlers in the household. Another may include extended visits by friends or relatives with chronic physical conditions. Yet another might simply mean that we have decided to streamline our homes and extend our self-sufficiency a few years.

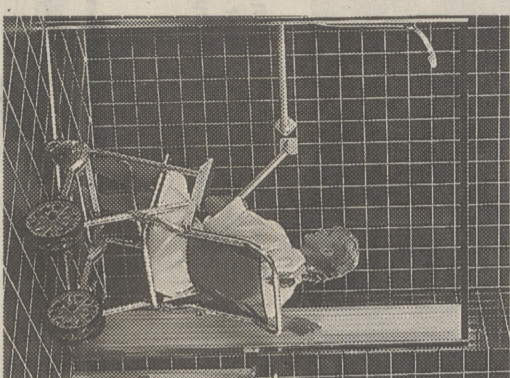
Attractive, supportive products can make an appreciated difference to different people for different reasons, reports Judith Milley, a frequent speaker and writer on Universal Design. Adapting Homes in an Aging Society or what she calls "Greater Later Housing Products and Providers." Products and systems that one family member likes because they are so convenient or save time may appeal to someone else because they promote safety or accessibility, she explains. Yet another person may love the same products or designs because they reduce the effort required for routine daily chores.

Milley encourages designers, builders and remodelers to offer packages of designs and products that promote multiple benefits. "Some of the most clever, sensible and supportive products I've encountered at building trade shows include bathroom accessories that make any size bathroom function better for any size or age person," she points out.

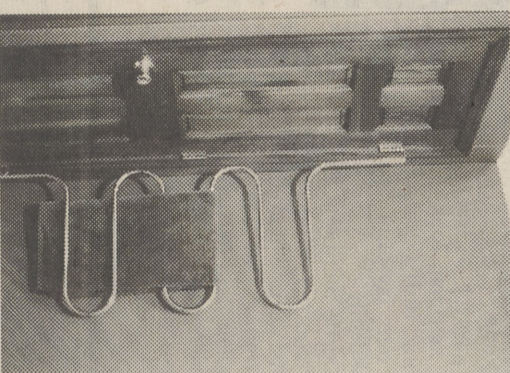
Designs and products that help people avoid falls and reduce clutter in the bathroom help that room work better and more safely for anyone. Because young children, people with physical limitations

homes function more supportively. **Start With Something Simple**

Something as simple as towel bars can make a difference, and Milley uses this example in her seminars for designers, builders and remodelers. Each person who regularly uses a bathroom requires three feet of hanging space for a bath towel, hand towel and washcloth. Shared bathrooms are rarely equipped with adequate towel bars, and virtually none of those racks are located at heights convenient to preschoolers or to a person in a wheelchair or someone whose gripping ability is limited by arthritis or stroke. Milley suggests securing a vertically tiered towel rack to the hinges of the bathroom door or to a wall near bathtubs, showers and lavatories.



Support rails, adjustable height hand-held shower heads and hinged, vertical panel shower curtains promote accessibility and independence.



The Euroback from Hinge-It Corp. tucks nine linear feet of towel or laundry hanging space behind a bathroom or linen closet door.

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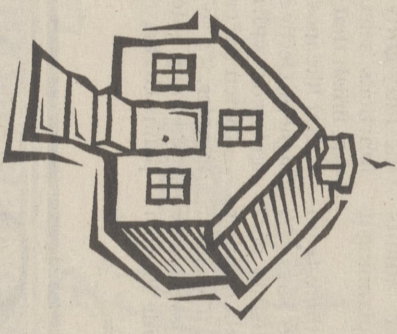
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Window shopping? Little research goes long way

Whether constructing a new home or remodeling an older residence, one of the decisions a homeowner ultimately faces involves the selection of windows. There are many styles and manufacturers from which to choose, each offering a variety of construction features. To some extent, personal style and aesthetics will drive the decision. Price and energy efficiency also are considerations.

While you may be tempted to defer to the recommendations of your builder or remodeler, there are several questions every consumer should ask before making any window buying decision. **Is the Manufacturer Certified?**

A sure sign of a well-constructed, quality unit is the certification label either etched in the glass or printed on the spacers between the lites of glass. Windows can earn one of three designations — C, CB or CBA — depending on how they perform in the tests. The CBA level is the highest rating and means that a window has passed through three levels of simulated weatherization testing without showing signs of condensation or fogging.

Does the Window Manufacturer Offer a Warranty?

A well-constructed, dual pane unit should last a minimum of 10 years. However, many manufacturers offer only a one-year warranty.

If you are considering purchasing a dual pane, sealed window unit, ask your contractor about the manufacturer's warranty that accompanies the window. If the window system fails in five years, causing excessive drafts or allowing condensation to form between the panes, will the manufacturer replace it?

Also, inquire as to whether any of the window components are covered. For instance, Tremco, the manufacturer of the insulating glass spacer, Swiggle® Seal, offers window manufacturers a warranty on their product. **What is the U-value of the Window?**

Window manufacturers use U-values to measure thermal performance. U-values measure heat transfer. They describe the overall thermal performance of a window unit, taking into account such aspects of the unit's construction as window type, frame material, glass coatings and spacer materials. When determining a window's energy-efficiency, the lower the U-value, the better. A U-value of .40 is considered excellent; .60 is good; while .80 or higher indicates poor thermal performance.

Is the Window Constructed with Conventional or Warm-edge Spacers?

Dual and triple pane windows are constructed with edge spac-

ers designed to reduce heat loss around the windows' edges. These materials used to construct these edge spacers can mean the difference between a drafty window edge and one that is well insulated against the cold.

Some window manufacturers use conventional, tubular aluminum spacers filled with desiccant that aids in preventing condensation from building up between the panes. However, because metal conducts heat, aluminum spacers diminish the insulation value of a window, resulting in a higher U-value. Other manufacturers have abandoned aluminum spacers in favor of warm-edge spacers. However, not all warm edge seals perform identically.

Does the Window Have a Low-Emissivity (Low-E) Glass?

Regular, uncoated glass allows heat to escape from your home in winter, and in summer, allows heat to flow from the hot outdoors into your air-conditioned rooms. To guard against this phenomenon, some window manufacturers use low emissivity — or low-E — coatings on one pane. Low-E coatings block the long-wave infrared radiation that can account for as much as 60 percent of a window's heat loss. They also protect indoor furnishings from sun damage.

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