



A Barrier Free Bathroom Makes a Lot of Sense (And Cents)

By Jeffrey Kerr

In my Spring 2015 article I wrote about making your home visitable. The two main features in a visitable home are a barrier free entrance and bathroom. The entrance welcomes everyone, regardless of their mobility and the bathroom gives them the option to stay. In this article I'd like to focus on the barrier free bathroom.

A barrier free powder room (toilet and sink) is a great start. However, for many reasons which I'll talk about in this article, I recommend a full three piece bathroom that includes a roll in shower.

Bathrooms present some of the greatest challenges in the home in terms of access and function for people who use wheelchairs and other mobility devices. It only makes sense that any upgrades to promote ease of use will benefit everyone.

Barrier Free Showers

Barrier free showers are becoming very popular and for good reason. They add value to your home and appeal to homebuyers of all ages and abilities at the time of resale. Everyone can appreciate the practicality and beauty of an easy to use remodelled shower.

When renovating for someone with mobility issues, a roll-in shower can be the perfect solution.

A roll-in shower stall is similar to a conventional shower, but it is large enough to accommodate a wheelchair or commode, and also an attendant if needed. Roll-in shower floors ideally have level thresholds and are slightly slanted to allow the water to drain easily.

Users who shower in a seated position find the hand held showerhead and longer hose to be much more user friendly. It allows the user to spray the water where it is needed. With a conventional shower head the user has to move their body to find the water spray.

Your new shower can often go in the same spot as your old tub. This alleviates the need to move plumbing and helps to reduce the costs.

A barrier free shower can be as small as 3 by 3 feet, but 3 by 4 feet is considered a better choice to allow for easy movement.

Walls need to be reinforced to accommodate the placement of grab bars. Floors need to be non-slip. Showerhead controls and niches for shampoo and soap should be accessible from both a seated and standing position. Some barrier free showers are designed without the need for shower curtains or doors.



Additional Benefits

Benefits are not restricted to the obvious ease of entering, exiting and using the shower. A barrier free shower:

- Is easier to clean;
- Provides additional comfort with an in-shower bench;
- Updates the look of your bathroom;
- Saves money, since a shower uses about 50% less water than a bathtub;
- Is a positive feature for persons of all ages and mobility levels when you decide to sell your home.

...And any pet owner knows it makes bathing your dog much easier!

If you add some of the newer options available such as heated flooring, multiple showerheads, and towel heaters – your bathroom will look and feel more like a high-end spa!

Accessible Bathtubs

Let's face it, many people still enjoy soaking in a nice hot bathtub. Fortunately huge advances have been made to make bathtubs more accessible in addition to supplying many spa-like features. Of course safety is paramount, so ensure you have a non-slip surface, reinforced grab bars, and a flat-bottomed tub to provide stability.

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Celebrate #GivingTuesday on December 1st

Giving Tuesday is about taking time out of the frenzy of Black Friday and Cyber Monday. It is a time of year when many of us are thinking about gifts, parties and celebrations – but this day is an opportunity for us to focus on supporting our communities.



Taking place on December 1st, Giving Tuesday is a national day dedicated to giving back. It's also an opportunity for charities like Spinal Cord Injury Ontario to connect with you, our members, donors and supporters. The people who make it possible for people in our community to achieve independence and rebuild their lives.

We are an official Giving Tuesday Canada Partner and we're excited to share with you many ways that you can be part of this wonderful movement.

Give

When you make a donation on December 1st, it will be matched dollar-for-dollar. We are very excited because this year a generous donor, Siskinds, the Law Firm, has agreed to match all donations received on Giving Tuesday. This means that your donation will have twice the impact!

Your donation will assist members of our community get access to the support they need to

be independent and rekindle a passion for life after sustaining a spinal cord injury.

Volunteer

You can give back by volunteering your time. At Spinal Cord Injury Ontario, we rely on volunteers to help with running events, office assistance, writing for our publications, and to offer peer support. If you are interested in volunteering, send an email to volunteering@sciontario.org for more details.

Get Social

On social media platforms, like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, use the hashtag [#GivingTuesdayCa](#) to be part of the conversation on December 1st. You could take a [#unselfie](#) (a photo of yourself showing how you give back in your community) and share it with our network.

Check out some of the sample posts that you can use in our online Giving Tuesday toolkit on our website, and learn more by visiting www.sciontario.org/GivingTuesday. ●

By Sarah McKinnon, Development Officer, Annual Giving

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Speak with a professional who can assess your needs versus what is available and the cost factors. Although more costly, a walk-in tub provides easy access and can be perfect for persons with limited balance and agility.

Some Practical Considerations

Of course there are other considerations – the entranceway to the bathroom has to be wide enough to accommodate a current or future user with a wheelchair; the toilet and sink also need to be accessible including appropriate placement of grab bars.

Bathrooms are the most dangerous place in our homes regardless of whether we have a disability or not. About 70% of all home accidents take place in the bathroom. Accessible bathroom design increases safety and helps to reduce falls.

From a re-sale perspective, I recommend a roll in shower rather than a walk in tub because it appeals to much wider audience.

I was pleased to list one home for sale that not only had a roll-in shower in the master bath but had also upgraded the guest bathroom to include a roll-in shower. The home was both visitable and had a resale advantage.

Upgrading your bathroom will reap benefits you can enjoy for years to come. And it will give you the option to stay in your home longer – another big advantage.

For more information on buying and selling wheel friendly / barrier-free real estate, please contact:

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When you make a donation on Giving Tuesday you'll be making twice the difference.

Thanks to a Siskinds, the Law Firm, donations received on December 1st will be matched dollar-for-dollar so that your gift will have twice the value.

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