



## **Assistive Technology for Older Persons**

There are approximately 40 million people over the age of 65 in the United States. Common problems for this group include decreased vision and hearing, and decreased mobility and motor skills. Many older persons may benefit greatly from the use of assistive technologies that have traditionally been marketed to and used by people with disabilities. These assistive technologies are gaining mainstream recognition as they aid older persons in the areas of safety and independent functioning.

Assistive technology items, or devices, vary widely, from very low-tech and low cost devices such as jar openers, to high-tech devices that aid in communication. These devices can assist in all areas of living, including eating, cooking and meal preparation, dressing, bathing and toileting, walking using stairs, using the telephone, engaging in recreational activities and managing both medication and finances. In essence, an assistive technology device is an item that can help an older person accomplish a task that he or she would be otherwise unable to do, or to do safely and/or easily. Related to assistive technology devices are assistive technology services, which include evaluations, to ensure that the device is the right one for the particular user, and training on proper use of the device.

### **Eating, Cooking and Meal Preparation**

- Reachers, or grabbers, have trigger handles and jaws that allow people to access items that are in hard to reach places.
- Faucet extenders are reachers that allow for easy use of the faucet.
- T-turners are devices that can be placed on a stove or other appliance knob to make it easier to turn.
- Eating utensils with built up handles require less strength to hold and use.
- Jar openers with handles allow greater leverage in opening jars.
- Microwave ovens allow for safe, quick and easy meal preparations.
- Power peelers for peeling fruits and vegetables decrease the strain of repetitive motion.

## Telephone Use

- Telephones are available with large buttons, speed dial, amplification, and hands-free voice recognition, as helpful alternatives to traditional telephones.



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🌐 [disabilityrightsnewjersey.org](http://disabilityrightsnewjersey.org)

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- Talking caller ID announces aloud the telephone number and/or name of the caller to allow screening of calls.
- Telephone extension arms hold the receiver for hands-free telephone use.
- Telephone dialer sticks fit into the finger holes of a rotary, or press the buttons on touch-tone telephones to assist in the motion of dialing.

### **Reading and Recreational Activities**

- Lamp magnifiers enlarge and illuminate printed materials or anything of interest for ease of vision.
- Narrated books on tape are available through libraries or for purchase as an alternative to reading.
- Book holders or reading stands offer hands-free reading.
- Cardholders hold playing cards securely and provide a clear view of them
- Enlarged playing cards enhance the numbers for easier vision.
- Battery powered scissors allow easy cutting of both paper and thin material.

### **Medication Management**

- Pill crushers and splitters cut pills easily.
- Pill boxes compartmentalize and label pills to organize them for each day of the week.
- Pill box timers remind the user to take medications at the proper time.

### **Memory Aids**

- Recorders and Livescribe pens and some apps can help in remembering a sequence of tasks.
- All devices phones, digital watches, tablets, I-pads, can all serve as advanced clock and alarm devices that can be programmed to make specific announcements at certain times and at certain locations as a reminder to the user.

### **Bathing and Toileting**

- Grab bars provide safety and stability in showers and near toilets.

- Bath and shower seats allow easier access to and stability in the shower or bathtub.
- Long-handled bath brushes help in bathing difficult to reach areas.
- Raised toilet seats decrease bending.

### **Dressing and Grooming**

- Bedrails prevent falls out of bed and aid in rising from and getting out of bed.
- Velcro on clothes and shoes allows easier closure.
- Button loops with handles allow easier fastening.
- Zipper pulls with handles hook into zipper for ease of up and down motion.
- Extended shoehorns prevent extreme bending.
- Stocking aids or sock pulls minimize bending.

### **Walking and Using Stairs**

- Canes, crutches, walkers, scooters and wheelchairs aid with mobility in and outside the home.
- Seat assists are cushions that lift to aid in rising from chairs and sofas.
- Stair lifts or glides with seats can be installed on most staircases as an alternative to stair use.
- Ramps, either temporary or permanent, can be installed to avoid stair use outside the home.
- Residential elevators and platform lifts can be installed inside the home to avoid stairs.

### **Where can I get assistance in obtaining information about assistive technology for older persons?**

The Richard West Assistive Technology Advocacy Center (ATAC), a program of Disability Rights New Jersey, provides information and referral, outreach and education, technical assistance and legal and non-legal advocacy in the area of assistive technology. Call 1-800-922-7233 in state, or access our website at the address below.

