

# Help yourself to assistive devices!



## Information for seniors

There's a solution to most problems. If you find that you experience discomfort or fear doing activities you once loved, or if you've started to avoid certain situations, it's possible that an assistive device can help you overcome your difficulties. This fact sheet provides information on assistive devices, their use and where you can obtain them. Canadians of all ages and situations have improved their quality of life, thanks to assistive tools that respond to their particular needs. Why wouldn't you?

### What are assistive devices?

Assistive devices ease the strains of daily activities at home, at work or at play. They include medical equipment, mobility aids, information technologies, practical daily aids and gadgets to suit all tastes and needs. The table on the next page lists certain devices that can considerably improve your quality of life.

### Why use them?

With age, loss of vision, hearing, bone density and balance can present serious health risks. Poor hearing, for example, is a condition that affects more than half of the people over 65 years of age and can put you at risk of misunderstanding crucial instructions, of falling as a result of loss of balance, of being deprived of phone calls or social meetings and of not hearing vehicles on the roadway — all of which can compromise your physical and mental health.

Don't let your disability or sensory loss infringe on your lifestyle, especially when tools and devices exist to help you overcome these obstacles.

Whether you need a cane or a hearing aid, a wheeled garbage bin or an intercom system, a magnifying glass or a pill organizer — make sure you get them and use them! Improved health and quality of life are within your grasp!

### Where do I start?





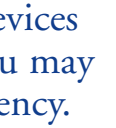


Start by consulting your physician or health centre if you think you need the aid of an assistive device.

You can also obtain valuable information regarding available assistive devices in catalogues and seniors' magazines.

**Q. If I use an assistive device, won't I appear older?**

**A. Absolutely not! unless appearing older involves having good sense, independence and confidence.**

## At your service!

Task	Assistive devices	
Bathing	Grab bars, hand-held shower heads, bath seat with arm rails, non-slip floor mat.	
Dressing	Long-handled shoe horn, velcro fastenings, sock pullers, rubber gloves (for gripping tight-fitting stockings).	
Preparing food	Easy-grip utensils, side-opening oven door, height-adjustable cupboards and counters, automatic-stop kettle, pouring aid.	
Eating	Easy-grip utensils, specially designed dishes.	
Moving/physical activities	Canes, walkers, wheelchairs, slip-resistant flooring.	
Using the telephone	Loud-ringing phone, flashing light ring indicator, large numbers and buttons, automatic dialing.	
Doing the laundry	Main-floor laundry room, easy-access equipment.	
Enjoying hobbies	Playing card holder, long-handled gardening tools, television remote control with large buttons and a captioning button.	
Entering the home	Loud doorbell or flashing light signal.	
Securing your home	Automatic light device, personal or home alarm system, cell phone, thermostat control.	

### Do I need a prescription?

Certain devices, such as eyeglasses and hearing aids obviously require an expert's assessment, but many assistive devices for the enhancement of daily life are easily obtainable in general and specialty stores. For other, more expensive assistive devices like a wheelchair, it's advisable to go to a professional, especially if you think you may qualify for a complete or partial reimbursement from a funding or insurance agency. Any form of reimbursement generally requires that you undergo an assessment and obtain a prescription for the more expensive assistive devices.

## Where can I find assistive devices?

Eyeglasses and hearing aids are available through specialists (see the yellow pages for a list of specialists under *Opticians* and *Hearing aids*). Your doctor could probably provide you with a list of specialists.

Devices such as wheelchairs, walkers, bath seats and grab bars are all available from stores that sell *Medical supplies* or *Wheelchairs* (see the yellow pages under these headings for a list of stores). Before buying one, consider consulting a specialist such as an occupational therapist (a cane, for example, needs to be of proper weight, length and handle for you). Also consider borrowing or renting the device to find out whether it serves your needs, especially if you're choosing between more than one device, like whether to invest in a wheelchair or a walker.



Specialty computer stores carry items like screen-reading software that include screen-enlargement features for individuals with reduced vision. Voice recognition systems and modified keyboards and mice are also available for people with mobility and dexterity limitations.

Qualified pharmacy personnel are usually quite happy to provide information on a variety of other available products: magnifying glasses, bath seats, joint support bandages, pill organizers, canes, etc.

### Universal Design

More and more products are being designed for use by everyone regardless of age or capacity level. This approach is called “universal design,” and it seeks to improve ordinary products to accommodate the daily living needs of seniors and handicapped persons, as well as Canadians of all ages, health, status and personal situation.

Hardware stores offer many “universal design” kitchen utensils, as well as other items for home use, such as wheeled garbage bins that are more easily moved or intercom systems that allow you to communicate with someone at your door without having to rush to answer it.

Get help finding what you need. Don't hesitate to ask friends (or anyone!) where they got their automatic card shuffler, playing card holder, or any other useful gadgets or aids that could improve your daily life in any way.

## Who pays?

Some provinces and territories have programs to help seniors or people with disabilities purchase the assistive devices they need at affordable prices or even help with obtaining a bank loan.

Certain community and non-profit organizations such as the Kiwanis, Rotary, Lions Club or Royal Canadian Legion may offer advice or assistance for procuring assistive devices. Friends and family may also be willing to contribute, if they can, to the cost of your assistive devices or in helping you find the devices or fill out the necessary forms.

Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) offers a wide variety of programs and services to veterans and other eligible clients. The health care program, Aids for Daily Living, assists clients with the purchase of assistive devices such as prosthetic and orthotic devices, walkers, canes, wheelchairs, etc. To learn more about the programs, services and funding offered by VAC, contact your regional office (see the blue pages of your telephone directory under Government of Canada). If you have access to the Internet, you can visit the VAC website at: [www.vac-acc.gc.ca](http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca).

### *For further information, please contact:*

Public Health Agency of Canada  
Division of Aging and Seniors  
AL: 1908A1  
Ottawa, ON K1A 1B4  
Phone: (613) 952-7606  
Fax: (613) 957-9938  
Web: [www.phac-aspc.ca/seniors-aines](http://www.phac-aspc.ca/seniors-aines)  
E-mail: [seniors@phac-aspc.gc.ca](mailto:seniors@phac-aspc.gc.ca)

### **Nothing to lose, everything to gain!**

Assistive devices can have a positive impact on your mental health. By living the active, social life you desire, you remain independent, self-confident and positive. Use assistive devices with confidence. You'll become a model of initiative and good sense for others who are reluctant to enjoy their benefits!

This publication can be requested in alternative formats.

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## Provincial and Territorial Contact Information

### Alberta

Alberta Health & Wellness: 310-0000 and ask for (780) 427-1432 (toll-free)  
Aids to Daily Living: 310-0000 and ask for (780) 427-0731 (toll-free)

### British Columbia

Ministry of Health Services, Medical Services Plan:  
1-800-465-4911 (toll-free); (250) 952-1742  
Ministry of Human Resources, Enhanced Medical Coverage  
Health Benefits Branch: 1-888-221-7711 (toll-free)  
Disability Benefits: 1-800-337-3531 (toll-free)

### Manitoba

Manitoba Health Office  
Ancillary Programs, Insured Benefits Branch:  
(204) 786-7365 or (204) 788-2526; 1-800-392-1207, ext. 7365 (toll-free);  
TDD/TTY: (204) 774-8618  
Home Care Equipment Program: (204) 945-8611

### New Brunswick

Department of Family & Community Services: (506) 453-3953

### Newfoundland and Labrador

Health & Community Services: (709) 729-4984

### Northwest Territories

Department of Health & Social Services, Health Benefits Coordinator:  
1-800-661-0830 (toll-free); (867) 777-7400

### Nova Scotia

Department of Health: 1-800-225-7225 (toll-free)

### Nunavut

Department of Health & Social Services: (867) 975-5700

## Ontario

Ministry of Health & Long Term Care Infoline:

1-800-268-1153 (toll-free); (416) 327-4327; TDD/TTY: 1-800-387-5559 (toll-free)

Assistive Devices & Home Oxygen Program:

1-800-268-6021 (toll-free); (416) 327-8804

TDD/TTY: 1-800-387-5559; (416) 327-4282

## Prince Edward Island

Department of Health and Social Services

Division of Aging & Extended Care: (902) 368-4900

## Quebec

Ministry of Health & Social Services: 1-800-707-3380 (toll-free)

Health Insurance Plan: 1-800-561-9749 (toll-free)

Québec: (418) 646-4636; Montréal: (514) 864-3411

Handicapped Services: (819) 475-8585; 1-800-567-1465 (toll-free)

TDD/TTY: 1-800-567-1477 (toll-free)

## Saskatchewan

Health Insurance Registration Branch: 1-800-667-7551 (toll-free); (306) 787-3475

Aids to Independent Living Program: (306) 787-7121

## Yukon

Department of Health & Social Services: 1-800-661-0408 (toll-free)

Extended Health Care Benefits to Seniors Program: (867) 667-5403



*Computer aids*

*Adapted kitchen*

*Card shuffler*