

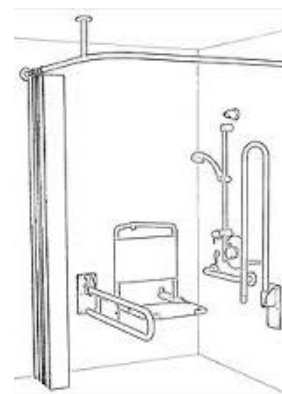
Modifying your Home: **Level access showers**

December 2015

Is it difficult for you to get in and out of your shower or bath? There are a number of modifications that could be made to your shower or bath that might make it easier for you to use it. The Ministry of Health might be able to help fund these modifications.

The type of modifications the Ministry of Health can help fund for your home will depend on your disability related needs and situation. They could include:

- using a bath board, transfer bench or swivel seat
- installing grab rails
- removing the shower doors to provide more space
- installing a hand-held shower
- installing a level access shower.



What is a level access shower?

A level access shower is also known as a wet area shower. The floor of a level access shower is level with the bathroom floor so it is easier for a person with a disability to get in and out of the shower. The shower area is designed so that a person is able to either sit on a shower chair or lie down on a shower bed when showering.

The shower floor area is usually at least 1200 millimetres x 1200 millimetres. This is a large enough area to slope the floor so that the water can flow to a drain in the centre of the shower area. There are usually only two walls, and a hand-held shower rose is mounted on a sliding rail to make it easier to move up and down.

Is a level access shower the best option for you?

A level access shower can help you be more independent. It can make bathing easier and safer for you and the people who support you.

To get a bathroom that works well for you, you need to think about how you get around, what your needs are and what your home is like.

The main things to think about

- Will there be enough space to move around safely in your bathroom if a level access shower is installed? If you have a separate toilet next to your bathroom, you may have to think about removing the wall between the two rooms to make a bigger space in the bathroom.
- If you have more than one bathroom, which one is the most practical and cost effective to modify?
- Are there any windows, doors, electric wiring and items like toilets, baths or vanity units, or water and sewerage pipes that will need to be moved?
- Will you need to replace a toilet, vanity or bath with new items?
- Will you need to replace any floorboards or upgrade the electrical wiring, plumbing or the hot water cylinder?
- Will a level access shower affect other people who live in your home (for example, if you need to remove a bath in order to install the shower)?
- Do you need to either sit or lie down when showering? If you need to use a shower chair with a tilting seat or a fold-down shower bed, your shower will need to be larger to have space for these things.
- Do you need somebody to assist you to have a shower or bath? If you install a level access shower in your bathroom, it may mean that you may be able to shower without any assistance.
- How long will you be living in your current home? Could your needs and circumstances change over the next two to three years?

Other things to think about

- You must get a building consent to install a level access shower. Find out more about the building consent process in our factsheet *Modifying Your Home: Building Consent*.
- Council regulations require a 'temperature reducing valve' to be fitted with shower modifications. Installing this valve on an older-style hot water cylinder may lower the water pressure throughout the house.
- Level access showers usually have vinyl floors. Tiles are not as slip-resistant as vinyl, are more expensive and need ongoing, regular maintenance.
- The floor area for a level access shower is based on your disability needs, such as whether you need a special commode chair, a fold-down bench to lie on or extra room for carers to help you.

However, installing a level access shower can be a major renovation in your home. It can be expensive and disruptive. Sometimes modifying your bathroom may not be the best or only option for you. Maybe you should consider moving to another home that suits your needs better.

Getting modifications to your bathroom

Contact a Ministry of Health Equipment and Modification Service (EMS) qualified housing assessor to help you work out what modifications you need for your bathroom. They will help you work out the most cost-effective option for your needs and if you can get funding from the Ministry of Health.

EMS qualified housing assessors are occupational therapists. You can contact them through your:

- local district health board
- Needs Assessment Service Coordination (NASC) organisation
- GP
- www.otnz.co.nz/public/find-an-occupational-therapist/
- Enable Information on phone: 0800 17 1981.

You may also choose to organise and pay for modifications to your bathroom yourself.

Ministry of Health funding

- If you have already paid for any modifications to your home yourself, generally you cannot claim back the cost for those modifications from the Ministry of Health.
- The Ministry of Health has a limited amount of funding available for housing modifications to support disabled people. They use a **prioritisation tool** to make sure this funding is used as fairly as possible. The prioritisation tool compares your current needs and how much you will benefit from the home modifications with other disabled people's needs.
- Funding is available for the most cost-effective option to meet your needs. For example, you may be able to manage your bathing with the support of some simple equipment, such as a bath board or grab rails, rather than building modifications. These simpler options should always be looked at first.
- Generally you can only get Ministry of Health funding once for a particular type of modification. For example, you will probably not be eligible for funding modifications to your home bathroom if the Ministry of Health has already helped modify a bathroom to meet your needs.
- If the total cost of the modifications to your home is more than \$8,076 (including GST), you will have to have an **income and cash asset test** to work out whether you need to pay any of the cost yourself. The total cost includes the cost of any other modifications that the Ministry of Health has already funded for you since you turned 16 years of age.

Modifications to your home for a child aged 15 years or younger do not need an income and cash asset test. (Find out more about the income and cash asset tests process in our factsheet *Modifying Your Home: Income and Cash Asset Tests*.)

- Ministry of Health funding does not cover costs for:
 - heating and ventilation within the bathroom
 - hot water cylinders
 - extra storage or cupboards within the bathroom (however, where a cupboard or vanity has to be removed to install a level access shower, funding may be available to replace it)
 - re-installing a bath that has been removed to put in a level access shower
 - floor tiles in the bathroom area
 - any renovation work or improvements that are required before the funded modification can begin or be completed, for example, for water-damaged wall linings that need repairing before a new shower can be put in place.

For more information about level access showers

If you live:

- **in Auckland or Northland:**
contact **Accessible**
Freephone 0508 001 002
Email **info@accessible.co.nz**
- **anywhere else in New Zealand:**
contact **Enable New Zealand**
Freephone 0800 17 1981
Email: **enable@enable.co.nz**



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