

## Using Grab Bars

By Joe Steckler, President, Helping Seniors of Brevard County

This article is for the thousands of us in Brevard County who use grab bars. I picked the topic while attempting to activate one of our Long-Term Care Insurance policies. The required form was short but did not include the type of care necessary to perform simpler activities of daily living; instead, it was structured to address dementia or skilled nursing care. After reading the form, I decided that the insurance company needed a simple statement of our needs and am working on that now. The other reason for this article was my own need for a grab bar when generally one was not available.

Consider the number of times that we visit with others in their homes. Throughout the United States there are many (most likely millions) of homes that could benefit from the installation of strategically placed grab bars in their guest bathrooms. The two most likely places would be near the commode and in the shower. YOU may not need such an appurtenance, but visitors to your home might be thankful for your thoughtfulness. Not a lot of us are as agile or flexible as we were years ago and would certainly use these devices.

Grab bars have become more pleasing in appearance, but the burnished stainless-steel ones are still available and do the job. What matters most is where you place them. Sit on the commode and imagine where you would put a bar if you thought you needed one, and that is most likely where it should go. Consider also the thickness of the grab bar as well as its slipperiness when wet for a shower grab bar. The bar can be placed in a vertical or parallel position. We started with the parallel but later had a vertical bar installed close to the shower exit. Remember that these bars are intended to prevent a fall and should be placed where you think they will best assist you.

I think you would be surprised if you went to a store offering such bars and saw for yourself the changes that have been made. You might be more inclined to install bars in strategic locations in your home. If you are contemplating installation of grab bars, I recommend that you use the ones that are bolted or screwed into the wall or placement

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# PAW'S CORNER

By Sam Mazzotta

## Do Cats Really Need Potty Training?

**DEAR PAW'S CORNER:** I read with interest your recent column about cats using shop towels rather than kitty litter to do their business. How did their owner manage to train the cats to use the towels and switch from litter? And why not just let a cat do its business outside?

– Caroline D., Winchester, Virginia

**DEAR CAROLINE:** Compared with dogs, cats are usually easy to potty train (or litter train) because they have very specific potty behaviors. Cats instinctively bury their poop to hide their scent from potential predators -- hence the use of cat litter, which also absorbs urine well and masks the scent for a few days.

I'm not sure how the reader did it, but one way to switch a cat from litter box to a pad is to place the new pad and tray next to the old litter box so that a cat can sniff around it, check it out and become familiar with it. After



a day or two, remove the litter box and put the pad in its place. Many cats will get the message right away. Others might hunt around for their box; if you notice this, place them gently on the pad to help them make the connection.

I'm not a big fan of letting indoor cats go outside to do their business. They'll often head straight for the nearest flower bed, leaving a surprise that I'm personally not thrilled about. They also are at risk in the outdoors, from coyotes, turkeys (yes, turkeys in the Northeast), cars and other cats. It's better to provide a safe spot indoors with a clean litter box.

Send your tips, comments or questions to [ask@pawscorner.com](mailto:ask@pawscorner.com).

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location. You may have had a guest dislocate a toilet paper holder or tear a sink away from the wall when leveraging themselves up from the toilet. Consider the person who is using the device for leverage, and their dismay when it was pulled from the wall. Remember also the size of the person you're trying to help and locate a safe sized device attached in a suitable location.



I am confident that you are aware that most of my articles are based on personal experience or associated with on-the-job training. Senior years are at times a challenge, but I am sure you know when something you read could prevent a fall

or an embarrassing situation. Use of grab bars could save a life and prevent costly hospital stays and will prove a benefit many times over. Use them. §

Contact *Helping Seniors* at 321-473-7770, at [www.HelpingSeniorsofBrevard.org](http://www.HelpingSeniorsofBrevard.org), or at P.O. Box 372936, Satellite Beach, FL 32937.

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